

PRIDE AND POVERTY.

BY MRS. H. A. H. HOUK.

The grand party was over at last. Nothing else had been talked about in our little domicile for the past week.

With a sigh of relief, I pulled off my gloves, that had been worn a dozen times, and cleaned with bread-crumbs almost as often. I was weary and depressed; too much so to find relief in a "good cry."

Aunt Priscilla responded to my faint "good-night" in a perplexed way. I interpreted her thoughts thus:—

"What does the girl mean? I've done all I can, yet she does not seem to be grateful."

Once in my room, I drew the bolt, and threw on the bureau my gloves and fan, the latter a dilapidated mass of ivory and gilt paper, a cheap affair at the best. I took the poor faded rose from my hair with a feeling akin to pity for it and myself. We both might have spent a happy evening at home if it had not been for that odious party,—it blooming on its parent stem, perfuming our little parlor; and I busy with my books and sewing. Poor Aunt Priscilla too! how the good soul must have dozed and nodded, waiting until two o'clock for me. Altogether, it had been a miserable evening for all of us,—my poor white rose, old aunty, and my wretched self.

I took off my flimsy silk. The wan, white face that met my gaze as I passed the looking-glass almost startled me, it looked so like a ghost. I rubbed my chilled arms and neck into a better state of feeling; then, wrapping my blanket shawl around me, I sat down in my rocking-chair by the window. It was a warm shawl, and one of the few articles of comfort belonging to my wardrobe. Too much of it was selected by aunt because it was cheap and showy.

Not forgetting economy even in my despondency, I drew the lamp to me, and extinguished its faint flame with a vigorous sigh. The brilliant moonlight flooded the room. I leaned back, and fell into a reverie.

I recurred to the happy days of school-girl life. I thought of the father I never knew, and of the gentle mother who with her dying breath recommended me to the

kind care of Aunt Priscilla. The care had been given with a full, free heart; but I am afraid I was not always grateful. She was peculiar, and we did not always harmonize. I think I should have been tolerably amiable if "my lines had been cast in pleasant places."

I was naturally indolent and luxury-loving; and the life of continual self-denial and sacrifice that I led did not improve my disposition, to say the least. It was a trial to get up on cold mornings, and make the fire and cook breakfast. We did not often incur the expense of keeping a servant. I was not particularly fond of dress; but it was a great trial to wear the flimsy fabrics aunt bought for me under the mistaken idea that it was economy to buy cheap goods. It seemed to me to be downright extravagance to purchase a cheap material, that, with all the care I took of my clothes, would wear but a short time, when, for a little more money, a fabric could be bought that could be turned wrong side out, colored, and washed, as the occasion required. It was unpleasant to check every rising desire with the thought, "We can't afford it."

Another disadvantage. I was in rather feeble health. I had been "running down," as aunt termed it, for some time. Accordingly she had dosed me with teas of various sorts. I could have told her what was the matter; but I refrained for fear of hurting her feelings. Toast and tea, on which she thrived, were not the material to make healthy blood and muscle for a young person. I was fond of light and warmth. Our sitting-room and parlor was always darkened when the carpets were new. Aunt said the sun faded them. And, now they were faded and worn, the rooms were darkened to conceal their defects. It was necessary to be economical of fuel, so I shivered over the grate generally in cold weather, and longed for summer.

It was never too warm for me, nor did the sun ever shine too brightly. My room had no carpet to fade, and the window curtains were of white muslin; so in the long summer days, with the windows wide open, I

fairly reveled in the glorious warmth and light.

Certainly, we were very poor, but very proud. I had never known better days: but aunt had once been wealthy; consequently, as is almost always the case, her economy, or what she pleased to call it, was really an injudicious expenditure of her limited means, and they did not go so far as they might. We still "held up our heads," as the saying is. Aunt said it was necessary for us to accept all invitations; for, if a few were declined, we would soon drop out of sight. We were ignored by some; but there were those who still called on us, and invited us to their parties.

The way I came to be included in Laura Briggs's list was in this wise. We had been schoolmates; and as she was *not only* dull, but lazy, I wrote her compositions for her, solved her problems, prompted her in her classes, and assisted her in various ways. The morality of the proceeding I did not question: it was too common to excite scruples. As a natural consequence, we had been quite intimate, and Laura had not entirely dropped me.

There was another potent reason. She had an ambition to give the largest party that had ever been given in our town. When our invitation came, aunt resolved herself into a committee of one, and discussed aloud to me ways and means, and finally decided as to my toilet.

"You must have a new silk dress," said she, giving her every-day frizette a vigorous poke that sent it off on one side.

Away went the vision of the new merino I had been hoping for all the fall.

"There's my gold beads, breast-pin, and shell comb, that will do for ornament."

"And your snuff-box," I almost groaned out.

It never occurred to her that articles of jewelry ever went out of date, or that her immense shell comb was anything but the height of fashion.

The next day aunt spent in shopping.—coming home at dinner-time, and drinking a cup of tea with her bonnet and shawl on.

Toward evening she returned, with a small package in one hand, and a fashion magazine in the other. Throwing herself into a rocking-chair, she untied the parcel, and exhibited to my astonished eyes a flimsy silk,—the pattern of which, to say the least, was startling. I agreed with her

perfectly as to the cheapness of the purchase, and I could hardly keep from telling her that it looked very cheap.

"Now," said she, handing me the magazine, "look this over, and decide how you will have it made, while I take off my things, and make some toast."

I forgot my chagrin while I turned over the leaves of the periodical. It was a borrowed one. My eyes fell upon a story, and straightway I became so absorbed that I hardly heard aunt open the door.

"Well, what have you decided upon?" said she.

I hastily turned to the fashion-plate, that I had not examined, and in a confused manner pointed to the figure of a bride arrayed in a white silk with an immense train and high corsage and long sleeves.

"I think I will have it made like this," said I.

"Mercy on us!" cried aunt, in astonishment. "What are you thinking of? It will have to be made low-necked and short-sleeved, and every breadth must be gored, and then it will hardly be wide enough."

It was no use protesting. I felt completely subdued, and sewed diligently at the obnoxious garment and made other requisite preparations.

When the eventful day arrived, I was dressed long before dark, in order to quiet aunt's apprehensions that I would be too late. I had time, before the sun went down, to survey myself in the looking-glass. If I did not present a gay appearance, it certainly was not the fault of my dress. My emaciated neck and arms were not an agreeable sight. But my eyes rested satisfactorily upon the lace in the neck of my dress. That, at least, was not a sham: it was a relic of better days. I plucked the single rose that adorned my little bush, and put it in my hair, which was abundant. The breast-pin, although old-fashioned, was a modest affair. The gold beads, after much persuasion, aunt allowed me to wind around my wrist in lieu of a bracelet. She insisted that I would find it impossible to wear the shell comb unless I removed the rose. I did not inform her of my intention not to exhibit that relic at the party, but finally convinced her that both could be worn.

Having no escort, I started quite early. A few ladies were in the dressing-room when I arrived. Some gave me a curious

look, and two or three condescended a few words of recognition. I retired to one corner, took off my wrappings, and finished my toilet in obscurity rather than encounter the gaze of the rapidly increasing numbers.

I deposited the shell comb in a safe place, and announced myself ready to Laura Briggs, who kindly sent her brother, a youth of sixteen, with a faint promise of a *moustache*, to escort me to the parlor. I made my *entrée* in as unconcerned a manner as possible, seated myself in a corner, and played with my fan.

The band soon struck up, and I found amusement for some time in watching the dancers. But that grew tiresome after a while. The heated dancers ordered the windows and doors to be thrown open, and I soon grew wretchedly cold. I looked, with bitter thoughts in my heart, at my fan, and then at the scarfs and opera cloaks that the dancers had thrown aside.

Not venturing to appropriate one of them for my present comfort, I quietly stole upstairs to the dressing-room. I drew a rocking-chair up to the grate, and gave up to bitter musings. Why was it that I should be uncared for and neglected, while others, who were undoubtedly my inferiors in point of intelligence and education, received the homage of men and women of sense and refinement?

The walls of the room were hung with pictures. Some of them were really choice paintings. There were a few statuettes scattered here and there through the room. Who appreciated them? Not Laura certainly. There was no love of the fine arts hidden under that dull, indolent exterior; and I heard her father and his hard-working spouse groan over their cost, averring that prettier pictures—old Mr. Briggs pronounced the word "*picfers*"—might have been bought for one-tenth the money. It had always been a fervent wish of mine, that I might some time be able to gratify my taste for painting and statuary. My eyes, in wandering around the room, were arrested by an exquisite copy of Raphael's *Madonna*. The firelight brought the picture out from the canvas with a vividness that startled me for a moment. There was a calm and holy repose in that sweet face that quieted and soothed me. All bitter, envious feelings passed away as the moments grew into hours. My soul soared

above all earthly passion, and claimed kinred with her, "the blessed among women."

I was brought back to earth by the consciousness that the music had ceased. Supper was probably announced. I hurried down to the parlor, and joined the chatting, laughing throng that were making their way to the supper-room.

The opening of a side door threw me rather violently against a short, puffy old gentleman, who once had been an humble suitor of my aunt's,—when he was a poor clerk, and she a wealthy belle. He greeted me with,—

"Bless me! how do you do, Miss Agnes? how is your aunt? Your poor father—I knew him well. Where have you been all the evening? been dancing every set, I expect. Dear me? how gay you young folks are!"

All this was uttered so rapidly, there was no time for me to make a reply. Indeed, the old gentleman's face became quite apoplectic in appearance, with his exertion to make the most of the time. After something resembling a gasp, he continued,—

"Know Winchester?"

This alluded to a young gentleman near us, who was escorting a haughty-looking stranger to the table.

The gentleman in question seemed to be the centre of attraction during the evening. My old friend, hearing my softly spoken "No," which to my chagrin he echoed with emphasis, awkwardly presented me to the gentleman; and I, to make matters worse, dropped my fan, and, in stooping to regain it, struck my head against Mr. Winchester's, who essayed to perform that kind office for me. There was a general titter among the bystanders, and I could hardly keep back the tears of mortification.

After supper, the dancing was resumed; and I went up to the dressing-room, and, donning my wraps, went quietly out of a side door, and started home.

A group of gentlemen were smoking on the farther end of the porch; but some perverse fate prompted Mr. Winchester to pace up and down, and as I came out of the door, I encountered him, and, in spite of all my protestations that I was not afraid, he insisted upon escorting me home. I thought of course it was from pity for such a forlorn-looking creature as I was, and I scorned to be the object of such a sentiment, and

my replies to his attempts at conversation were short and ungracious.

I rose the next morning, determined to carry out my resolution of the night before, which was to have a plain talk with Aunt Priscilla, and, so far as I was concerned, to end a life of stinting and pretence by seeking some employment. I announced my decision at the breakfast-table.

"If it is a disgrace to work," said I excitedly, "I am going to disgrace myself. Does n't everybody know that the parlor carpet is covered by a drugget because it is faded and full of holes that can't be patched any longer; and the chairs are covered with linen, not to save them, but because the seats are worn out? and," continued I, warming with my subject, "can't everyone see that we have hardly enough to eat to keep us healthy?"

This last remark was the climax; and poor old aunt, completely discomfited, gave up.

As no saying is truer than the one, "Providence helps those who help themselves," I found little difficulty in obtaining a school in the country, and also a pleasant boarding-place in the family of one of the directors, whose name was Hunt. They were elderly people without children, with the exception of a son of Mrs. Hunt's by a former marriage. This young man's praises were so constantly sounded, and his perfections so often enumerated, that I not only lost interest in that individual, but regarded him with aversion. I understood that he was a lawyer in a distant city, and I never troubled myself to inquire as to his surname. His mother and step-father called him "our John."

My new occupation absorbed my time and attention. I grew healthy and happy in the bright country air; and, invigorated by a substantial country diet, the roses bloomed anew in my once pale cheeks, and I felt pleased and glad at the transformation. One must be satisfied with herself to be happy.

The vacation season drew near with the

approach of the long summer days; and I further shocked poor aunt's pride by engaging myself to sew for Mrs. Hunt during most of the time. That good lady complained of her failing eyesight; and that obnoxious John had to have shirts made, and there were piles of family sewing to be done, and she assured me I could do the work at my leisure.

I planned a delightful summer for myself. I indulged in some new books; and between sewing, reading, and wandering through the fields and woods, I passed the days.

Aunt had taken an old friend to board, "for company," so I had no uneasiness about her.

One day I returned from a long ramble, laden with flowers and mosses, with which I intended to adorn the parlor. I stepped unceremoniously into that room, and, to my astonishment, confronted Mr. Winchester. I hoped he would not recognize me; but my hope was vain, and my face flushed painfully as he came forward coolly, calling me by name, and proceeded to relieve me of my burden of treasures.

For a few moments I was puzzled to know how he found his way to such an out-of-the-way place. Then it flashed over me that this was "our John," whose name was so disagreeable to me. He had come home for a few weeks to rest.

My foolish prejudices faded rapidly away in the pleasant summer days when we sat beneath the locust-trees, I with my sewing, and he reading aloud from some favorite book.

When autumn drew near, I went back to Aunt Priscilla, to leave her very soon as John Winchester's wife and the mistress of a beautiful mansion filled with treasures of art.

Aunt Priscilla was delighted beyond measure; for my fortunate marriage restored her to the position she had occupied in her palmy days. Every year we gladden her heart by a visit, and she proudly receives the numerous attentions that are always lavished upon the fortunate.

PRINTS UPON PAINT.

BY MRS. D. F. CULBERTSON.

Forgetful for the time being of the duties awaiting her, Peri Halstead stood on tiptoe arranging a winter bouquet in the hanging cornucopia on the wall. For the moment the irrepressible twins were forgotten. The baking, churning, and ironing were sunken in the common Letho.

Just now, the graceful drooping of the delicate fern, the feathery plumes of swamp grass, and effective placing of long sprays of golden-rod, claimed her attention, to the utter exclusion of more matter-of-fact duties.

Her brown hair fell over her shoulders, — only a hair-pin here and there among the meshes to tell the tale of its obstinate refusal to stay in the sober work-day coil, — and it rippled and waved and caught the sunlight drifting through the east window, till its lustre almost shamed the bright, brown eyes fixed so intently on the bouquet. The fair face was touched with a faint flush on the cheeks, the lithe, lissome figure was drawn up to its full height, — the white arms bared to the shoulder, and small, brown hands fitting industriously among the plummy grass, and brilliant tassels of golden-rod.

Evidently, the picture was appreciated by the somewhat haughty-looking young man who paused for a moment before the open door.

"Experience!"

The call rose suddenly, loud and shrill, above the monotonous buzz of bees and whirl of flies, and if anything could recall the now startled girl to the work and worry of every-day life it was the call of that old Puritan name, in the shrill voice of her aunt.

"O dear!" And the sudden start sent spray after spray of fern and rhodanthe fluttering to the floor.

"The twins!" The chief care rising up-permost quite naturally.

"Are mixing mortar for the masons?" continued a strange voice outside the door; and to add still more to her dismay, she beheld her new neighbor, the grand mogul of the village, standing on the threshold,

quite self-possessed and proud, with only the most remote suspicion of a smile in his dark gray eyes. Luckily, she retained presence of mind enough to express her regrets that the twins gave the masons so much trouble, — all the while remembering her short dress, and bare arms, and the peony flush she felt rising to her forehead.

The gentleman doffed his hat courteously, revealing a forehead broad and white, shaded by waving blonde hair, and passed on.

Poor Peri was ready to cry with vexation. Her life previous to this summer, it seemed now in retrospection, had been one long gala day, little cares and duties rippling through it, only to give life a brighter tinge by making her feel herself useful to those she loved. But now the mole-hills which encompassed her assumed mountainous proportions. And at this moment she felt that almost anything could be better borne than the proud, clear eyes of Raleigh de Lemetre watching their homespun ways. The little maiden resented, with a bitterness unnatural to her innocent heart, the idea of this young aristocrat founding a country seat, whose shadow would fall over the little gray home of her father. She glanced over the gently undulating fields, the great orchards, the low, green stretch of meadow, and the brook running like a thread of silver between its willow-fringed banks. Had he chosen this place for the sole purpose of making her miserable? The very audacity of the thought sent gurgles of laughter over her red lips, — for he did not even know of her existence; much less, that through the agency of his masons, and the mischief of the children, she would be made "miserable."

Time was, she thought, — hopeless that it would ever be again, — when the dear little elves wandered at will through clover and brier across the way; and how they were to be kept within the boundary of the old farm, with their propensity to steal out of sight, and the facility with which they climbed fences, was the question. But her hopelessness changed to despair when

she found the twins in their paradise of amusement.

They were delving in the white, glutinous mass of mortar, with pieces of shingles, — watching it drop with dull thuds on Patrick's hod, with all the earnestness of life and glee of childhood, — as if, in all the future, they cared for no greater destiny than mixing mortar for the masons, while Pat, half amused and half indignant at the hindrance, quoth, —

"Och, miss! they're fine childer; but wad ye be afther takin' thim out to dig praties wid the boys anenst the orchard?"

Humiliated beyond expression by the little rogues' mischievous occupation, as well as their appearance, — for their curls were misty with sand and lime-dust, and their aprons suggestive of mud-pies and mortar, — poor Peri felt almost faint, when cognizant of the perplexity of Pat, and the amusement of the masons; nor was she to get them coaxed away quietly.

Phil led her a most undignified race through the clover, till the osage hedge was reached; here the little urchin paused somewhat discomfited; he peered through the thick, green wall which even a bird would not dare to penetrate. He put his hands in his apron pockets, and made a ludicrous, infantile attempt to whistle, — as he knew his brother foe would do in such an emergency, — and at that moment Mr. De Lemetre's beautiful Arabian came bounding across the pasture field, arching his neck over the hedge, till his nose seemed in alarming proximity to Phil's dusty curls.

Never a doubt had Phil but that this grand creature intended to have a "boy" dinner, in preference to oats, — not a doubt but that he was ready to leap the hedge; but, with all the implicit faith of a child in sister's aid and strength, he ran to her arms as fast as the little, bare, brown feet could carry him; and Sultan opened his big, bright eyes, with an almost human inquiry, — mutely asking why any baby ran away from him, — then shook his mane disdainfully, and paced proudly away.

Peri carried Phil — who had neither strength nor spirit, for the time being, to walk — to the bars, where little Kate waited patiently for them.

Thoroughly wearied by her long race and tiresome walk, Peri sank exhausted upon the porch, leaning her head against the lattice-work, scarcely heeding the autumnal

beauty around her. The red berries of the sweet-brier, which grew by the steps, blown closer by the south wind, tangled themselves in the brown waves of her hair, which hung in a loose, floating mass over her shoulders; and Katy, ever repentant, nestled close beside her, whispering promises of marvelous goodness in the days to come; promises all too frail, as the past had proven, which would vanish like a breath before the ideas of mischief now dormant in the little brain.

Aunt Cass stood in the doorway, looking grimly toward the figure of little Phil dodging here and there among the shrubs to avoid the attacks of a bee whose anger he had provoked.

"It's too bad for you to be kept running after the children so much. But they will get tired going across the road by and by, and will be less troublesome."

"I don't mind the children's mischief at all," Peri answered, drawing Kate closer, and fondling the dusty curls. "I would rather see them wild and even wayward as they are, than have them mope like poor Dick Payne. But it is the presence of that aristocrat over the way which troubles me; I cannot bear the cool scrutiny of so dignified a personage. It makes one feel so ridiculously small, auntie;" a light, girlish laugh rising to her lips. "I wish I could have hidden myself under your thimble, today; or have been an ostrich for an hour, with that bird's privilege of diving my head under the sand!" She rattled on recklessly, quite amused by the horrified expression on her aunt's face.

Thence on, the time sped monotonously enough. The hazy atmosphere grew yet more hazy, and the blue far-off hills seemed still more distant behind the mist, which hung like a veil from their summits.

Peri worked on, — shrinking somewhat from the presence over the way; kept the children from the new mansion as much as possible, gathered the sweet-brier buds, and fashioned them into necklaces for the round, white throats; and the glowing scarlet of the berries was more precious to their young fancy than the glitter of diamonds or glimmer of pearls.

To be sure, there had been several escapades, from one of which Katy's new pink calico dress had come forth rather startling to say the least, with the front and side breadths blushing faintly through a wonderful coat of paint, and Phil's mites of fingers

proved plainly his attempts at the improvement of his brown hands.

But, after all, the mole-hills were disappearing; and the best of all was Aunt Cass's promise. For that estimable lady had opened her heart and purse, by the announcement that when Robinson's next payment was forthcoming, which was seven hundred dollars, she would purchase a piano for Peri.

"For the child deserves one, if ever a girl did, what with the work she has done, and the worry the twins have put her to."

And with a sugacious nod, Aunt Cass betook herself to the chip-yard, with no notion of having her heart entirely melted by Peri's sweet gratitude.

Aunt Cass was rich, according to backwoods ideas; and one of a class, by no means rare in the country, who deny themselves comforts, which should be indispensable, only to bestow their savings upon those they love even better than themselves.

Aunt Cass's generosity had caused Peri and her brother to finish their education; had taken the mortgage off the farm, and added more acres to it; while Aunt Cass, herself, scolded and worked, and practiced self-denial, as though her life depended on it.

When pay-day came, and with it Robinson, she stowed the crisp bills in a handbox, under her best cap, and smiled grimly when she thought of the trip she would make to the city the next week, and how the piano would look in the pretty parlor.

Not that she liked the music; if she had her choice, she would take an accordion in preference to a piano. But if her ears must suffer, and her nerves pay the penalty, she could and would sacrifice that much for Peri. When her brother advised her to deposit the money in a bank until ready to use it, she quoth wrathfully, —

"Yes, and the bank burn or break, like enough, and then where would be Experience's piano?"

No amount of rasoning could change her decision; she was steadfast as a rock, — with the most unlimited confidence in the protection of that cap of valenciennes, and the most profound contempt for those bulwarks of public safety the banks. To her mind that mist of lace was equal to a hydra-headed monster as guardian of those crisp bills. So they reposed peacefully in

the handbox, and the owner worked and scolded on.

Two days after was a great gala day for the county. The fair was to close on the next afternoon; and this day had been set apart for the races, which all were eager to witness.

The Halstead family were all going but Peri. She had visited the grounds the day before, and her interest was somewhat dulled. Besides, there were the grapes to be transmuted into jelly, and what better opportunity than a day all to herself?

So she helped her mother and Aunt Cass to dress, — then took the twins under her care, and in a short time brought them out to the waiting carriage, fresh and sweet as roses, their brown curls gleaming like satin in the sun, the most innocent-looking fairies in the world; and the horses paced away slowly, as if dumbly conscious of the weight of dignity and the vision of loveliness they drew.

Flitting here and there, hanging up the cast-off apparel, sweeping and dusting till every room was neat as the delicate hands could make it, so passed the first hours of the morning. Then she brought up from the cellar the great basket of Rebeccas; carefully pressed the amber juice, and, weighing her sugar, put the prospective jelly over the fire.

A shadow fell across the sunlit floor, but she was too intent upon her employment to notice it. She must get the skimmer, she thought, turning and entering the pantry, which was indeed a storeroom, wondering, vaguely, why Aunt Cass had forgotten to remove the key from the lock, for it was one of Aunt Cass's foibles to keep the room locked at night.

She stood on tip-toe to reach the skimmer she wanted, which hung high above her head, when a sudden bang of the door caused her to lose her balance, and she would have fallen had not the sink lent its kindly support.

A click of the key in the lock, on the outside of the door, followed; a hideous gibber and laugh, such as a fiend might utter; then a scampering of feet across the floor, and doors opened and shut with a crash which echoed through the rooms.

Poor Peri leaned her head against the shelves, almost paralyzed with terror, unable to gain a clew to this mystery. That she was a prisoner she knew only too well.

The only window the room contained would not open at all. Owing to some peculiarity of the wood in the sash, the damp weather had caused it to become so tight in the casement that a greater strength than hers would be required to move it.

Perhaps, if the key was in the lock, she might succeed in turning it back; but a glance in the staring key-hole sufficed to show her that the key had been removed.

Of course it was a burglar. Some one, perhaps, who suspected that Aunt Cass's money was in the house. If she could only get out; and she shook the door in frantic endeavor, but in vain. If it was any other day. But every neighbor for miles around was gone to the fair. Even the painters and gardeners, who were at work in the mansion and on the grounds, had put aside their brushes and their shovels today.

She might call till she was speechless, and no one would hear her but the burglar, and he perhaps would murder her for it.

The next best thing she could think of was to watch through the key-hole. Perhaps she could see him, and so identify him when help came.

But, oh, the jelly!

For the white foam rose higher, yet higher, around the porcelain-lined kettle, seething at last over the hot stove.

The noise up-stairs was almost drowned by the sizzling, burning sirup on the stove. Boiling over,—falling in great billows of amber-flecked froth over the sides of the kettle, while the dense smoke soon filled the kitchen with the sickening odor.

By and by, as the fire burned low, a black, collapsed-looking mass in the kettle, a smoking char over the bright stove, was all Peri could see.

It was vain to deplore the fate of her jelly; but remembering Aunt Cass's oft-repeated insinuations, and thinking, with a little shiver, of the disappointment in store for that good lady, she did regret the loss of all those luscious Rebeccas.

A long time passed. The autumn breeze lifted the dense smoke-cloud which hung over the stove like a banner. Then she was conscious of a presence in the kitchen. As the figure approached, she almost laughed outright at the ludicrous object. A dwarf in stature, clothed in her blue silk dress, whose voluminous train was carefully carried on the left arm; the dirtiest and smallest bare feet, the yellow clay dried,

and cracking on the instep with every movement. Mrs. Halstead's winter shawl was pinned across her shoulders in a manner intricate enough to have done credit to a village belle, and Aunt Cass's best cap surmounted the tangled, unkempt locks, with an insane air quite unnatural to that innocent bit of lace, while beneath the basilisk eyes roved threateningly, with a wildness that struck terror to the heart of the silent watcher in the pantry.

Peri had only time to notice the roll of bank-notes in her hand as she sped swiftly out, with apparently no thought of the prisoner behind her.

The clang of the gate announced her departure; and Peri sank down on the bare floor, to await release with what patience she could summon.

Richard Kane and Howard Thompson—English by birth, crabbed by nature, and painters by trade—grew tired of the racing, and concluded to walk over to the mansion, and paint till sundown. They were overtaken by Mr. De Lemetre and his city friend Winthrop when close to the ground. The latter were driving, and passed the pedestrians, and were loitering around the grounds when they came up. Kane and Thompson walked around an angle in the building, intending to enter the house by the servant's hall. They were surprised to find the door open, and called Mr. De Lemetre's attention to it. As the gentlemen joined them, Kane, whose roving eyes were searching for some sign of depredation, caught a glimpse of the stairway which led to the wing chambers. Going closer, he exclaimed,—

"Hit's been them twins! 'Ere's the marks hof their feet hon the paint. Hif I 'ad the floggin' 'ot them!"—

And a look crossed his face, boding no good to the unfortunate objects of his ire.

"Han' the pains I took with the clouding hof them steps!" said Thomson. "Nobody could n't 'ave told them from real marble."

"A few strokes of your brush will obliterate the footprints," ventured Mr. De Lemetre.

"Hobliterate!" with the greatest contempt. "Hit would be the paint that would be hobliterated hinstead hof the footprints, by the time I got hover it." With a downward glance at a pair of feet, remarkable for nothing but unusual size.

"We will go hand tell their father, hand let them get punished for this."

And not deigning to pause, to listen to a word of expostulation, the indignant painters went off in great wrath, to lay their complaint before Mr. Halstead.

Mr. De Lemetre turned to his friend, who seemed quite puzzled.

"The twins you heard them blame for this are two of the sweetest, merriest little creatures in the world. The family do not allow them to come over if they know; but I have encouraged their visits when I have been here, and, when I have been absent, the workmen are apt to be a little out of patience."

"Do you suppose they came down the front stairway? There are only upward tracks here."

"The prints are larger than Katy's or Phil's foot would make, and there has only one person ascended; we will go above and see."

And they went to a front hall, where a majestic stairway led to the second floor. Traversing a hall and corridor, they soon reached one of the wing chambers.

On the floor lay a most grotesque object. A blue shimmer of silk, sweeping over the dusty floor; two bare feet with paint-marked soles; a brazen key and a roll of greenbacks beside her, as if sleep had found her gloating over them.

After the first sensation of surprise, Mr. De Lemetre's sole thought was to save the mischief-loving twins from blame or chastisement.

Going quietly away, with quickened steps, when the lawn was reached, they soon arrived at the Halstead gate. They found the Englishmen wandering around in a vague kind of way.

"There's nobody hat 'ome," they asserted very positively.

For though the doors were open, there was an indescribable sense of loneliness pervading the place. Perhaps the queer creature he had just left had aroused his suspicions; however it be, Mr. De Lemetre glanced in the rooms, then to satisfy himself if the family were indeed absent, he knocked loudly on the kitchen door.

Peri started up quickly, and called out, — "Come in, and for the sake of pity help me out of this prison!"

Her long imprisonment had worn upon her nerves, but had she known who she was

addressing, she would hardly have asked such a service from the gentleman who had been her particular aversion during the months past.

He advanced quickly.

"Who speaks? And where are you?"

"Peri Halstead. And I am locked in the pantry."

A half-formed wonder if this little country beauty had been locked up by her mother for some mischief which was inherent in the family crossed De Lemetre's mind; then, as if by magic, came a vision of the key by the side of the sleeping dwarf, and, with a whispered injunction to his friend, he went close to the door, while Peri related briefly the episode of the forenoon.

"There is a key in the new house which will unlock this door, if you can summon patience to wait for your liberty a few moments longer."

The Englishmen peered in at the door in the greatest amazement, which was augmented by the arrival of Winthrop bearing not only the key, but the notes, and having in tow the luckless dwarf; the cap of valenciennes awry, and the blue silk trailing half its length behind her. There was a wild, fitful light in her eyes, and, when the door was opened, and Peri confronted her, she gibbered horribly. But, though the young girl could not help shrinking from her, she begged that no harm might come to the poor lunatic; a promise readily granted.

When Kane and Thomson heard the whole, and knew that they had blamed the poor little twins for the dwarf's misdemeanors, their apologies were more ample than interesting: they returned to the mansion, and carefully repainted the steps; their humble demeanor lasting till sundown.

The family returned from the fair before the gentlemen had taken their departure. Their amazement at seeing their proud young neighbor conversing so familiarly with Peri was only surpassed by their astonishment when they heard of Peri's imprisonment, the stolen money, and burned jelly.

The last was a loss Aunt Cass could neither forgive nor forget. The money was a secondary affair, for it had been recovered; the cap, of course, she would never wear again; no more would she permit Peri to wear the ruined silk; as the creature had spoiled them, she was welcome to keep them.

But that jelly! And not another basket of Rebeccas to be had for love or money! And the stove whose brightness would only be restored after weeks of care and polishing! And poor Peri to be petted, and her piano promised for tomorrow!

When Mr. De Lemetre heard of the prospective piano, he asked permission to come over occasionally, and listen to the music.

"My sisters play," he said. "Indeed," he added modestly, "I practice some myself. And we ought to be neighborly, you know."

Aunt Cass relaxed her grim visage, and Papa and Mammina Halstead looked very neighborly and friendly indeed; and Peri assented a little coldly.

Then Katy was coaxed across the room for a share of the bon-bons Phil had been treated to; and the poor lunatic gibbered in the corner. That evening she was taken to the infirmary for safe keeping; and some days later her keepers came for her, for she had escaped from an asylum in a distant town.

It is supposable that Raleigh de Lemetre listened to Peri's music to some purpose, and quite often. Leastways Aunt Cass and her brother and his wife were fain to give their consent to an odd idea, which the mu-

sic must have suggested to the young folks, — to move Peri and the piano to the new house over the way. Strange as it may appear, the melodies had quite driven away the summer aversion; or was it the softened glances of the dark gray eyes which wrought the miracle of changing Peri's mind concerning the "young aristocrat"?

Certain it is, the village was quite electrified by the news of the wedding, and the fact that Peri Halstead had won the heart of the best match in the county.

To be sure, Winthrop did hint something in the club about De Lemetre finding his wife locked up in a pantry, and his search for her there was all on account of some foot-prints on the paint of his stairway. But, Winthrop's reputation for veracity not being the clearest, the club-members smiled indulgently, and straightway forgot it.

The twins grow in grace with added years; and, though their raids to the home of their sister are very frequent, they are none the less welcome for that.

Aunt Cass, still the mainspring of the Halstead homestead, gathers the Rebeccas with the greatest care, and makes the jelly, morally certain, that, if any one relieved her of the task, ill-luck would follow their attempt.

RAISED FROM THE DEAD.

BY MISS CAMILLA WILLIAN.

[NO. 2.—COMPLETE IN FOUR NUMBERS.]

CHAPTER III.

Doctor Thayer was not sentimental, and he was possessed by an earnest and fiery ambition in his profession. Moreover, his was one of those clean-working minds which never dally and dawdle, unless to dally and dawdle be the business of the hour; he always gave close attention to the matter in hand, which in this case was a very interesting dissection. But there was something so pathetic in the face of the child that he could not help pausing a moment to meditate upon it. No mother, no relative, no friend even, to take care of her during her sickness, to smooth the hair when she was dead, to adorn the small, cold form for its last sleep. The hands fell at her side as he undid the cloth that wrapped her, and not a ribbon, nor flower, nor bit of lace hid the bareness of the coarse, plain robe in which she was dressed. She was lovely, too. A dead child is almost always beautiful, but this child had a beauty of her own, beside the luminous whiteness, the chilly serenity, the inexpressible solemn sweetness which death had brought her. Doctor Thayer was something besides a physician, he was an artist; and for once his profession was forgotten, and instead of searching for knowledge, he paused to admire beauty. How long and curved the dark fringes to those white lids! With his gaze fixed intently and unconsciously on those closed orbs, he recollected the last time he had seen her, her pretty, shy way, her indignant grief when he had laughed at her, and the tears that had flashed in the beautiful eyes now shut and tearless forever. It had seemed a trifle to him then; but now he reproached himself with having been heartless and cruel. In a thoughtless moment he had wounded the heart and suffused the eyes of the little one whose whole short life had been a life of sorrow, and he had done it when he was happy; and when she had been doing the little possible to her to serve

the one he best loved. Now, as a fitting end to her deserted and friendless existence, her lifeless body, instead of dropping peacefully to dust beneath the turf, was exhumed to serve that science which could not serve her, even in preserving a few pitiful years.

"I vow, I hate to touch the poor, forsaken beauty!" the doctor said, rising erect after having bent over her for some time, and drawing a deep breath as he spoke.

He stood a moment looking on the lovely waxen image that lay there in the strong light helpless, in his power, seeming also by his quietness to trust him, and strange, vague superstitions began to stir his brain, and reach down to his heart. He shrunk from touching her with the knife, she was so beautiful, she looked so living. It seemed as if she would cry out if he should touch her.

"Who would think that hard work would unnerve me so?" he muttered, turning away from the table, and walking up and down the office.

The air was close and warm. He softly unlocked the door, and went out into the night. He did not dare to walk lest his tread should be heard; but he stood on the steps of the office and went through the dumb-bell exercises without the dumb-bells, drawing in full breaths of the pure, dewy air. It was the wrong way to strengthen his nerves, or silence his imagination; that could have been better done in sight of his bottles, instruments, specimens and skeletons. The strange, magnetic influence shed from that cold and lovely image from which he had fled, radiated from every object in nature. He seemed a centre for all the converging rays that pointed in tremulous gold from every star; the purple of the sky and the warm gray air seemed full of invisible and infinitesimal sparks of fire; the perfumes came in pulses, and were like the breath of some creature floating about him, or like fannings from viewless wings; all that live dark seemed but the thin veil over

some mystery which he could almost see, and which touched him with soft and thrilling touches, yet just eluded his clasp.

He shivered, clenched his hands, and strove to throw off the enervating influence.

"The air is full of death," he thought; "of that which we call death, and which is only a change-working power, dissolving lower organizations in order to form them into higher. Only pure health can resist the potent influence of this atmosphere."

Setting his teeth and clenching his hands in the effort to steel his mind, he returned to the office, locked the door behind him, and stood a moment looking over a book of anatomical plates that lay upon a shelf. Then he stepped decidedly back to the dissecting-table and prepared for his work, but without looking at the subject. Lastly, knife in hand, he approached the body, and bending over it he drew away the coarse robe that veiled its bosom. As he did so, a thrill crept tingling from his finger-tips over his whole body, and every pulse throbbed with a noisy beating that seemed to defeat his sense of hearing. The child's breast was rising and falling with an almost imperceptible breath, and, first the long-fringed eyelids quivered, then they lifted, and dear little Rose Paulier's bright eyes opened, and looked with a bewildered yet earnest gaze into the startled eyes that bent above her.

"My little darling," he whispered, hastily flinging the knife and gloves under the table, "do you know me? Do you feel better?"

She looked at him a moment longer without seeming to comprehend; then a change that was more a brightening of the whole face than a smile, came over her, and stretching both her arms up, before he was aware of her intention, she had clasped his neck, and drawing him down to her, kissed him as a child kisses its father when she welcomes him after an absence. He was both astonished and touched, it was so unlike the shy child, and besides, it seemed such a tender re-assuring after his self-reproaches on her account, and such an unconscious manifestation of gratitude for the life which he had accidentally both rescued and spared.

Anne Thayer was fully resolved that she would not sleep one wink till her husband's return. In spite of his tender care and thoughtfulness, she felt aggrieved, she scarcely could tell why. After the assidu-

ous attention of the lover, and the husband of a week, it was rather hard that he should so abruptly change his manner of life. She had counted on monopolizing his attention for the summer, perhaps for a year. She knew that people cool after a while, and she supposed that they would also; but it was a bitter disappointment to have his attention so soon taken up by other things. She did not mean to blame him, and she did not blame him, she assured herself; indeed, study the subject as she might, she could not find any fault with him; but she came back to the same conclusion, that it was hard. Of course with so many patients, some of them in a critical state, it was to be expected that he would be grave and pre-occupied; but why did not he tell her just what he thought of mamma? and why had not he told her where he was going that night? He did enough by day, and if night calls were to be made, he might get Doctor Marston to make them. Besides, she had heard him say that very morning to Meeta, "Be careful not to do too much, dear. You know you are our sole dependence."

The bride of a week did not like her sister to be her husband's sole dependence.

"I know I'm not like Meeta," she said to herself, beginning to cry; "but, then, I" —

Not knowing how to finish the sentence, or think of any possible reason why her husband should not have spoken precisely as he did, Mrs. Thayer cried a little while, and even while crying, fell asleep.

Meeta, after setting out a luncheon for the night-nurse, and seeing that her mother was comfortable, had gone to bed. She was learning that she must take care of herself, and that a weak yielding to grief and anxiety was not only vain, but that it rendered her unfit for the duties of the day. So, resolutely putting all thought from her mind, she closed her mental in closing her bodily eyes, and in a few minutes, by help of a sleeping-draught, was sound asleep. Charles alone, of all the family, remained up.

"I'm going to wait for the doctor," he said, as Meeta put her head in at the parlor door, and gently urged him to go to bed.

She looked sorrowfully in his face, and with a faltering good-night, left him, not daring to trust herself with a word of sympathy. Poor Charles was trying to be a man, and the effort made him look pale,

and prematurely grave. There was not only the fearful looking forward to his mother's possible death, but the pang which he felt on hearing of the death of Rose Paulier, and, also, that gloom and apprehension inseparable from a time of general sickness. Besides, it was now almost a fortnight since the day he had carried Rose, stricken with fever, in his arms, had taken her breath, had felt her burning cheek against his own. If he had caught the fever from her, it would show itself in a few days.

Charles had not mentioned this last subject to his brother-in law, but he thought that if the doctor should not be in haste to go up-stairs on coming in, and should be in a talking mood, he would ask him about it. The boy tried various ways to divert his thoughts, and watched the clock, wondering what kept Anne's husband out so late. Eleven, twelve, one o'clock, came and went; and just as Charles was thinking that really he had a mind to go out in the front yard and listen for some sign of a step in the street, he heard what seemed to be a knock on the back door. He listened, and it came again, low and cautious, but an unmistakable knock.

"Who in the world can it be?" thought the boy, going out through the kitchen, and from there into the corridor out of which the back door of the house opened. Here he heard the knock for the third time, but not now on the yard door. It was on the door at the end of the corridor which led to Doctor Thayer's office.

For the first time the boy felt a little alarm, but while he hesitated, the knock was repeated, and he heard Doctor Thayer's voice on the other side, —

"Charlie, won't you open the door?"

Charles immediately unlocked and opened the door, and saw Doctor Thayer there looking very pale and eager.

"Is anybody up but you?" he asked, hurriedly, before coming in.

"No; they're all asleep," was the answer.

At that the doctor stepped into the corridor, and laid his hand on his brother's arm.

"Charlie, I believe that you've got pretty good pluck," he said, "and I'm going to give you a chance to show it. How are your nerves? pretty steady?"

"I'm all right," the boy said, straightening himself up.

"Good! Now you know you told me that Rose Paulier was dead?"

"Yes," the boy said, clouding over a little.

"Well, she is n't dead, it was a mistake, and she is alive, and in that office. No matter just how she came there. Nobody must know it on any account. It would make trouble enough for me if it were known. No one in the house must suspect it, except Meeta, and she I shall tell in the morning. Can you help me? I must be in the house, and the child must not be left alone."

"I'll stay with her," the boy said, eagerly, understanding the whole matter at once. He had read of resurrections, and knew that doctors sometimes got subjects in a contraband manner; and he was far more likely to believe in marvels than one who knew them far better would have been.

Full of excitement, he followed his brother as he hurried back to the office, and stepping in at the open door, saw Rose Paulier lying on the sofa, a shawl wrapped about her, her head pillowed on a cushion, and her wide bright eyes fixed on them. She smiled as they entered, but did not move.

"Now, my little girl, I've got somebody to stay by you," the doctor said, sitting before her, and taking her small hand in his. "Do you want Charlie for company?"

She smiled kindly, but without perfect confidence in the boy.

"And I want you, too," contriving with delicate tact to express her preference without giving offence to the other.

"But I must go now," the doctor said. "I've got some sick people to see to. If you should be sick, Charlie will come after me. Will you be a good little girl and let me go?"

The smile had faded from her face, and the tears had rushed into her eyes; but she replied immediately with a faltering "yes."

"And you won't cry for me?" continued the doctor, kindly.

"No," said the child, lifting her eyelids with that peculiar motion of one who does not wish her tears to fall.

"I will come soon again," he said, smiling encouragingly. "And in the mean time if you should want anything, don't be afraid to ask Charlie for it."

Giving particular directions to the young nurse regarding his patient, and taking a

tender leave of both; Doctor Thayer went into the house, bidding Charles bolt the office door on the inside after him, and let no one else enter.

"What self-control and fortitude the little thing has!" he thought, as he walked slowly through the corridor into the house, and instantly started, and breathlessly checked a thought which he would not for the world have indulged. But surely it would have been no crime if Doctor Thayer had wished that all grown people had as much self-control and fortitude as were possessed by that little girl whom he had just rescued from the grave.

The morning came, and with it certainty as to the fate of the sick mother. Before that her fever had been slight, with intervals of ease, and only a white fur on the tongue. But when the doctor went in at daylight, he saw the change. There was a haggardness about the face that had not been there before, the pulse had grown harder, the lips were dark and cracked, and the tongue, shrunken, dry and almost black, lay like a strip of corrugated leather in her mouth. The truth could no longer be doubted nor concealed. Mrs. Wilson had not many more days to live.

We pass over these sorrowful days. They were bitter to all, perhaps least so to the dying woman herself. Meeta was prepared for the blow, and bore it as might have been expected, and Anne Thayer, when at length there was no more hope, called up her strength, and relieved her husband and sister of their fear of seeing her utterly prostrated. Perhaps poor Charlie was the one most overcome, though he tried to bear up nobly. He maintained a sort of composure before the others, and when he found his strength failing, would go off to Meeta's chamber, where Rose was secreted, and flinging himself down by her chair or sofa, would hide his face in her lap, and sob without control. He had no pride with her, for she never suspected that it was unmanly for him to shed tears, but only put her arms around him, and wept also, or tried to coax him back to cheerfulness.

The funeral over, and one day given to silence, the question came up as to what was to be done with Rose Paulier. For them to keep her was out of the question. It was equally out of the question to send her back to the poorhouse, even if any story could be invented to account for her sudden

re-appearance after burial. All the family agreed that the child must be placed where she would be better cared for in future. Charles pleaded that she might be kept with them, and persisted that she could be secreted for a while, then sent away to school till she could be presented without fear of recognition; but of course this romantic plan was vetoed. All the while the matter had been plain in the doctor's mind, and after waiting diplomatically till one project after another had been proposed and proved impracticable, he propounded his own solution of the difficulty, and after some argument, carried the day.

The next morning after the decision was made, Doctor Thayer made a call on Mrs. Barbara Burkhardt. He would far rather have been excused from doing it, but it was a part of his plan, and he was not a man to shrink for trifles. His relations with the Hall family were rather ceremonious, and he understood perfectly that Mrs. Burkhardt was not one who could easily forgive him for not marrying to please her, and for not submitting to be patronized by her. Like almost everybody else, he liked Mr. Burkhardt, and he tolerated Master Clarence's visits to Charles Wilson. But for this unpleasant feeling toward the lady of the house, it would have been a delight to go there on that radiant June morning. For a person of his taste, a view of the grounds or the house was a pleasure. The massive wall of red granite and cement that bounded the estate on the roadside was a fine piece of work, and the great entrance gate was uncommonly elegant in pattern. Inside, the avenue was wide, smooth, and bordered by a noble growth of elms, back of which, and separate from them by a strip of velvet verdure, were piled rocks and ledges overgrown with vines and flowers. Art had well assisted nature in that beautiful place. In some sunny spot, overgrown by a grape-vine, or a dusky pine or spruce-tree for background, would stand a rhododendron flushed with a cloud of rosy bloom; in some hollow of a ledge that looked wild as though primeval forests surrounded it, might be seen a sheet of rich purple which on nearer inspection you would find to be a bed of pansies. Where a tree had died it was not cut down, but vines, honeysuckle, woodbine or grape crept up and flung a green mantle over every bough and branch. In one place a whole dead tree was over-

spread by a net of strong wires, and in the immense cage so formed, a family of mocking-birds dwelt, and built their nests, and sang. A myrtle vine rooted in the hollow trunk grew over the north side of the tree and kept out any chill wind that might chance to come from that direction, and morning-glories climbed the trunk from the ground, and opened out their myriad chalices, white, pink and purple, about the lower boughs, here and there some venturesome blossom having reached far above the rest. The wire of this gigantic cage was of gray hue, and being invisible at little distance, the wonder with the beholder was why the birds stayed in the tree, and how those sprays of glossy myrtle and the frail bubble-like morning-glories remained suspended in the air. Far back in some shady nook, under pine trees that gathered in a sombre circle, you might see the ground spread, as it seemed, with a cloth of gold, and, pausing, half expect to behold some woodland queen set her pearly foot on the gleaming carpet, or a troop of fairies trip over it. Viewed nearer, it was thickly growing dandelions in yellow bloom. Presently streaks and spots of smooth green dropped or trickled among the rocks and trees, growing broader, and uniting as they neared the lawn, and lifting your eyes, you could see a glimpse of the stone railing that surmounted the wing of the house, and the airy cupola that crowned the centre. Then the trees opened to show a lovely, sloping lawn, flower-gardens and fountains, and the stately front of the Hall.

"Madam, or somebody, has good taste," muttered the doctor, as he paused on the upper terrace to glance about the grounds, and downward toward the road that bounded the estate, and was hidden by the billowy treetops.

"Good-morning, doctor!" said a voice at his elbow. And turning quickly, he confronted Mrs. Burkhardt, who immediately extended her hand and gave him a smiling welcome.

"I was sorry to learn of your trouble," she said. "I hope that the family are all well."

Mrs. Burkhardt knew perfectly well how to be agreeable, and she was too well-bred to show any sign of the surprise she felt at this unexpected visit. Evidently nothing but business would bring Doctor Thayer to the Hall at this time, or at any time, save

on the most ceremonious occasions. The two walked slowly toward the house, pausing now and then to comment on a view, a flower, or the weather.

The lady was by no means a blot on the landscape, but rather added the finishing touch to it. Her large, fine form and handsome face, the trailing folds of her rose-colored morning-dress, the white lace scarf over her hair, and the little white parasol she carried, made a very elegant picture. They went up the wide steps, madam stopping at the top to point out with her hand a glimpse of the distant ocean that glistened through the trees, then through the open door into a lofty hall that was lighted from the roof, and paved with a mosaic of native woods, set in an elaborate pattern. The stairway was in the rear of this hall, and was also of mosaic, the balusters richly carved of oak.

"I want to show you a pair of cabinet pictures we got in London," Mrs. Burkhardt said, leading the way into a pleasant morning-room at the right of the hall. "They were painted by a young German artist who was quite unknown, and was dying of consumption; but they are exquisite. C. says that the poor fellow would be famous if he could live."

"I should be happy to look at them," the doctor said, anxious to put a stop to the lady's courtesies; "but I came on an errand, and have but a few moments to spare."

"Oh, indeed!" says madam, seating herself immediately, and waiting with folded hands for her visitor to state his business.

"I am sorry that I am not able to explain fully the reasons for my coming to you on such an errand," the gentleman began quietly, admiring the entire and immediate transition which his hostess's manner had undergone from that of a charming entertainer to the business woman; "and still more annoyed that in so trifling a matter I am obliged to express myself with a somewhat melodramatic degree of mystery and reserve. I have to ask you to trust to me that I would gladly avoid so absurd a degree of diplomacy if I could."

The gentleman smiled a slightly mocking but very pleasant smile, and the lady bowed without smiling.

"You remember the nurse, Mrs. Pauller, who died here at your house two or three

years ago, and her little girl in the poor-house?" he went on.

Mrs. Burkhardt bowed again, and without opening her lips, which were pressed closely together, and somewhat pale.

"He knows how she died!" was the thought that flashed through her mind.

"You have also heard, doubtless, that the child died a week or two ago of fever?"

This time there was no sign of response, but the lady's brows were slightly drawn in a frowning shadow. Why did n't the man go on and tell his business? He was trying to torment her, she thought.

"I have heard from some one, possibly from yourself," the doctor continued, "that the mother left some little souvenirs which you are keeping till the child shall be old enough and in a situation to be intrusted with them. Of course, you would naturally suppose now that there is no one to claim these articles; but I have come across a person who has as much right to them as the child would have if she were living. I am not at liberty to explain; but you will believe that I must be satisfied in my own mind as to the rights of the person to whom I refer. If the matter is satisfactory to you, perhaps you would like to send these little souvenirs to their owner by me."

Doctor Thayer, though perfectly aware that his errand was, as he said, surrounded by an absurd degree of mystery for so small a matter, was nevertheless astonished at the emotion which Mrs. Burkhardt showed. She became perfectly white while he spoke, and when she answered, entirely forgot her usual ease and courtesy.

"This is very singular!" she exclaimed, fixing her flashing eyes on him. "I do not understand why the affair should be concealed from me, or why I should be required to give up these articles without knowing to whom they are to go."

Doctor Thayer looked at her in astonishment, and haughtily rose to his feet.

"I was not aware that I was making an insulting request," he said, coldly. "I do not know what the articles referred to are, or whether they are of any value save to the owner. My impression was that you would wish to give them to any person having a right to receive them, and that their chief, perhaps only, value lay in the fact that they would be souvenirs of the dead to a near friend who is living. I have no personal interest in the matter, of course, and

I beg your pardon for mentioning the subject. The owner will at some time call on you, but I shall not urge the matter any further. I wish you a very good-morning!"

Having finished his speech, the gentleman bowed lowly, and turned away with a very high head.

"Stop, doctor," the lady exclaimed, rising. "Of course I have no right to keep these trifles, and no wish to. I am merely annoyed that when I took care of the woman in her last moments, and have felt an interest in the child ever since, there should be so little confidence shown me in the matter. I prefer that you should take the articles if you are satisfied as to the claim of the person who demands them. Indeed, they belong as much to you as to me, and I am glad to get them off my hands."

"Pardon me!" said the doctor, stiffly. "I must decline taking them under the circumstances. I regarded the matter as a trifling one to you and to me, and as only of consequence to a near friend of the lady who is dead. I am astonished that it is sufficient to cause you any emotion, and I repeat that I shall on no account take the articles in question, but shall leave the lady's friend to call for them at such time as may be thought best."

"Doctor, I insist on your hearing me," Mrs. Burkhardt said, in a tone more entreating than peremptory. "You have no right to state an errand so oddly, and then leave me in this abrupt manner because I am surprised and annoyed, I request you to do me the favor to resume your seat."

It was impossible for a gentleman to refuse. Doctor Thayer returned to his seat, and waited for the lady to speak.

"You know some reason why this subject should agitate me!" she said, abruptly, fixing her piercing eyes on his with a look which she tried to make defiant, but which quailed in spite of her.

"I do not know any reason why you should be offended at my request," he replied, evasively, determined if possible to solve the mystery which he perceived existed. Rose had no friend but him; and if this lady was seeking to wrong her in any way, it was his duty to shield the child.

"He knows about the poison," the lady thought. "Perhaps I did wrong," she said, aloud, assuming a grieved and deferential air; "but I am not acquainted with the law in such cases; and having once ar-

ranged to conceal the manner of the poor creature's death, it was impossible to change my course afterward. I have been sorry ever since; and yet what could I do?" Looking at him appealingly.

"What was the cause of Mrs. Paulier's death?" asked Doctor Thayer, looking steadily in the lady's face.

"You do not know?" she said, in a trembling voice.

"I do not know," he replied, decidedly.

Mrs. Burkhardt dropped her eyes, and the blood rushed over her white face. She perceived that she had made a capital blunder.

"I should not have mentioned it to you had I not thought that you knew something about it," she resumed presently, in a suppressed voice, which gradually cleared, and grew more assured as she went on. "But I am not sure that I would not rather you should know it. I tell you in confidence!" Looking at him inquiringly.

"I shall not betray your confidence, unless my sense of honor would oblige me to," he replied. "You have thus far told me nothing. Perhaps you had better not tell me. If the affair is anything of importance, I ought not to make any promise in the dark, particularly as I am committed to Mrs. Paulier's friends. If she came to her death fairly, then I ask no further explanation."

"The apothecary made a mistake in the prescription," she said hastily, in a whisper.

"Ah!"

"It was Mr. *Somes*, you knew him, and it almost killed the poor man. Indeed, I do not doubt it caused his death. Doctor *Marston* had ordered morphia, and I don't know what horrid thing the apothecary put up. She died in a few hours. Of course we were terribly shocked and frightened, and our first impulse was to say to the servants and visitors that Mrs. Paulier had been taken violently ill, and to avoid all the talk and gossip we could. Then, on second thought, it seemed as well to conceal the whole matter, since Mr. *Somes* was in such distress, and promised to give up business immediately, and never to put up another prescription; and since really no one could be benefited by a complaint. If any friend of Mrs. Paulier's had appeared, I should have told the whole, and let matters take their course. In such a case, the business would have been taken quite out

of my hands. But under the circumstances, and since the only end to be attained was revenge on that poor apothecary, who would do no more damage to any one, and since I dreaded the publicity of the affair, why, I concluded to keep it among ourselves."

Ending, Mrs. Burkhardt sank back in her chair, folded her hands, and looked at the doctor for his opinion. By this time there was a spot of bright red burning in each of her cheeks, and the folded hands were folded very tightly.

"You forgot one end which should have been considered an important one," Doctor Thayer said, with cold severity; "and that is the poor, helpless child who by her mother's death was left not only an orphan, but utterly without friends and support. So far as I have heard, Mrs. Paulier was a lady, and had always had a good home for her child, quite a different home from the one to which the little girl was sent. If nothing else had been accomplished by an investigation, Mr. *Somes*, who was well off, might have been made to pay for the support and education of the child whom his criminal carelessness had deprived of her natural support and protector."

"I do not know the law in such cases made and provided," the lady said, in a slightly sneering tone, yet with an evident desire to conciliate. "Sending the child where I did, was not like sending her to the poorhouse. I put her under the care of Mrs. *Warren*, a most capable and excellent person, and meant to take her into my employment as soon as she should be old enough and fitted to sew, or be in any way useful. To keep her here was out of the question. I did not wish to bring her up in the house as a servant, nor would I have her as one of the family."

"After this explanation, I have no longer any feeling of delicacy about receiving the articles of which I came here to speak," the doctor said, coldly. "Shall I take them now, or will you send them to me?"

"I will send them to you," Mrs. Burkhardt replied as coldly.

A formal leave-taking, and the two parted, both sufficiently disturbed.

That evening, when the family at the cottage were gathered in the parlor after tea, there was a sound of horses prancing down their street, and presently Mrs. Burkhardt's carriage drew up at the gate, and

Mrs. Burkhardt herself descended. She had dressed entirely in black, and, having an errand to do, had anticipated a little, and made her visit of condolence rather sooner than she otherwise would.

"But those who have so long known each other may dispense with a little ceremony," she said, with mournful suavity, after having kissed both Meeta and Mrs. Thayer, and clasped the hands of the doctor and Charles. "And I think in the first days of our trouble, when we can't go out, we stand all the more in need of company, to distract our attention."

She was all grace and sweetness, was sympathizing, yet did not talk in that horrible skull-and-crossbones style which some persons feel obliged to adopt when making a visit of condolence. She prettily alluded to the fact that Anne had some one whose privilege it was to console her, and regretted that her congratulations to the bride must be made under the shadow of affliction. Just before going she drew from her reticule a tiny prayer-book bound in ivory and gold, and presented it to Mrs. Thayer.

"My wedding present comes rather late," she said, "but it is not, I hope, too late."

The bride acknowledged the beautiful gift, and made her acknowledgment for it.

"Come up and see Clarence," the lady said to Charles. "He is longing to tell all his friends about his first European journey. To be sure it was only three months in England, but it was across the ocean, and he feels quite traveled."

She took an affectionate leave of the sisters, begging them to come soon to see her.

"You need not see other company unless you like," she said. "Tell the servant, if we have any one with us whom you don't wish to see, to show you into my private sitting-room, or to Cousin Margaret's room. She would be delighted to see you. And, apropos of Cousin Margaret, doctor, will you be good enough to come up and see her in the morning? She is a great sufferer, and I really feel as though something might be done to relieve her. I wish that you would undertake her case."

Doctor Thayer offered his arm, and waited on Mrs. Burkhardt to the carriage. After she had taken her seat, and nodded to the two ladies who stood on the piazza, she drew a little package from a pocket in the carriage, and presented it, without a word,

to the gentleman, bowed to him, and was driven away.

Doctor Thayer felt as though his silence on the subject of Mrs. Paulier's death was bought.

"She is certainly very adroit," he said with a smile, as the three seated themselves in the parlor again, Charles having gone upstairs to see his pet prisoner.

"You can't, of course, refuse to go," his wife said, more pleased than she would have owned at the graciousness of their visitor, and that her husband should be physician at the Hall.

"I have no desire to refuse," he said. "It is my vocation to go; and it is a good place. I have n't tried to oust Doctor Marston, and need have no hesitation in taking his place, as he would have none in taking mine if the situations were reversed. Besides, the doctor is getting old, and has a large property, while I am young and have an extravagant wife to provide for," laughingly patting his wife on the shoulder. "Besides, again, I am glad that Mrs. Burkhardt is not likely to get a new physician here and try to put him in my shoes. She might do me great injury. And now, let us see what we have got here for our little Rose."

He opened the package, and took out the trinkets, surprised at their value and elegance. The miniature represented a young man of about twenty-five, exceedingly handsome, but rather weak-looking, just the face to captivate a young girl. The case was of fine gold, delicately wrought with a love-motto twined into the chasing of the border, and the name "Louis" marked on the back. A single row of large pearls surrounded the locket. There was a gold thimble scarcely larger than a child might wear, evidently an old one, and worn thin all over, a pearl ring with a single fine pearl in it, and the watch. This last was a valuable one, old-fashioned, but exquisitely made, and adorned with a wreath of pearl flowers. Inside the case was engraven "Rose from Walter."

"Let's go up-stairs and see the child," the doctor said. "She may know something about these."

But Rose knew only that the trinkets were her mamma's, and that the pictured face was that of her papa.

Doctor Thayer took the child on his knee, and questioned her closely about the per-

sons she had known, and those at whose houses she had been; but she could recollect no names save those three of the doctor and two ladies of whom Miss Fairfield had spoken.

"The doctor is dead; but I mean to call on the ladies some time when I am in town," Doctor Thayer said, absently smoothing the silken locks of the child as she leaned against his breast. Then, glancing at his wife, he put Rose down, and went to sit beside Anne. It was not the first time that the bride had shown a pettish jealousy on seeing her husband pet the little orphan stranger.

CHAPTER IV

When Rose Paulier was told that she was to have a new home, and that she was to go to it immediately, she made no ado. If she looked a little more sober than usual, it was scarcely noticeable, for she seldom smiled. But Charles loudly protested; and when Doctor Thayer started away at five o'clock one morning with his charge, the boy not only refused to eat any breakfast after it, but went off and wandered about the roads all day, not coming home till late in the evening. He had taken leave of Rose over night, and had not meant to speak to her in the morning; but at early daylight his door was opened an inch or two, and a soft voice whispered, —

"Charlie, are you awake?"

"Yes, little dear," he answered, fondly. "Come in."

First appeared a loose curl of brown hair pushed through the door, then the edge of a pale, sweet profile, then the whole lovely face was put in, which turned and looked at him with its bright eyes. At any other time Master Charles might have been shocked to have a young miss come to his room when he was in bed; but now grief at losing her mastered every other thought, and sitting up in bed, he stretched his arms toward her and waited, eager and silent, as she slowly and shyly came in, a step at a time, then a little pause, till she was close to him; then she sprang into his arms.

"Will you be sure to come and see me, Charlie?" she whispered.

"Yes, dear, if they will let me. And will you be sure to recollect your promise to me?"

"Yes, if I don't forget it," says Rose, doubtfully.

"You are not to tell it to anybody," he said, earnestly; "but you are to marry me when we are both old enough. Then we will keep house by ourselves, and nobody shall ever take you away from me. Remember, if any one else asks you to have him, you are to say that you are engaged."

"Rose, come, dear!" called Miss Meeta. And after one more kiss and embrace, she ran out of the room and down-stairs, wiping away the tears that came again as fast as she wiped them.

Doctor Thayer was in the dining-room, eating his breakfast.

"Come, little one," he said, "eat your breakfast as quickly as you can, and we'll be off."

Rose sat very properly up to the table, buttered her bread and raised it to her mouth. Then she put it down again, and glanced timidly at the other two, who did not seem to be noticing her. Her lip was quivering so, and her throat was so full, that she could not eat. Without appearing to notice her trouble, Miss Meeta tempted her with a little plate of jelly, but with equally ill success.

"Why, you poor child!" she said. "Who would think you would care about leaving us! Don't cry! You are going to a pretty place, where they will be kind to you; and if you wish, some time you can come to see us."

Rose struggled to hold back her tears, but they would come, and she gave a little sob.

"Are you sorry to go?" asked Miss Meeta, taking Rose in her arms and kissing her on the forehead.

"Charlie feels so bad," whispered the child, with quivering lips, nervously twisting the ribbon that bound Miss Meeta's curly flaxen hair.

"Eugene," said the sister-in-law, abruptly, "this is the most captivating child I ever saw. If I should live anywhere but in Saxon, I would have her to live with me."

"I hate to have her go away," the doctor said, "but there is no help for it. The circumstances of her being with us, and the manner of her coming, give me a peculiar interest in her and a claim on her. But there is no other way than the one we have decided on, and the sooner we get over it the better."

Miss Meeta sighed, and finding it impossible to make Rose eat anything, dressed

her for her drive, and drawing a veil closely over her face, led her down the garden walk and put her into the carriage that stood at the gate.

It was a lovely morning as the two rode slowly through the fresh suburban streets. The sun was up and lazily pushing before him the mists that clung in silvery masses wherever they could hide or hang. The fruit trees were in their fullest bloom, and the gardens were gay with flowers. Birds were darting about, dew was glistening and dropping, all nature was fresh, fragrant and awake. Sitting beside her guardian, quite content and safe since he was with her, Rose Paulier leaned back on the cushions and drank in the morning, vaguely enjoying all its beauty, and the smooth, light motion of the carriage. She watched the doctor, however; marked how even he kept the reins, and wondered if his shining little sorrel horse would n't rather carry him than any one else. Then her eyes traveled along the reins to the hands that held them. Only one wore a glove; the other was bare, and just touched the rein now and then, dropping again to the doctor's knee. It was a very handsome hand, white, beautifully shaped, with round and tapering fingers, sensitive at the tips, and adorned with a wrought gold ring, holding a small but very brilliant amethyst. Miss Rose watched this hand for some time. Its whiteness and symmetry pleased her, and she had a childish delight in the glittering gem. Then her eyes stole yet further, marked the narrow band of snowy linen at the doctor's wrists, the fine, clear gray of his coat-sleeve. Finally, the bright, inquisitive eyes were lifted suddenly to the gentleman's face and met his eyes watching them. He was smiling, and her glance instantly fell under that kind, penetrating, yet amused look.

"If one could know what thoughts are buzzing like bees inside that little head," he said, with graceful lightness. "If one could even guess what she is thinking about! Perhaps you are having a pleasant drive?"

She smiled up at him with a wistful look, as if desirous to speak, but not daring to.

"You won't forget me in the place you are going to?" he asked, fondly watching the changes on that fascinating child's face.

Instantly the soft brightness left her eyes

and lips; and in its place came an expression of astonishment, grief and alarm.

"Are n't you going to stay with me?" she exclaimed, all timidity gone.

He put his free arm about her, and with the white hand which she had admired, drew her pale face close to his bosom.

"My dear child, how can I? I must go home and live; that is the place for me. I would like to keep you with me, but it is impossible. Some time I will come to see you, if you don't forget me. Are you going to forget me, Rose?"

She said not a word, but clung to him, trembling from head to foot.

Doctor Thayer was indescribably touched. This friendless little one whom he had rescued from death seemed to belong to him, and to recognize that ownership. Was it not possible that in calling her back to life he had established some relationship with her as strong as that of blood? Was it quite right to put her so entirely out of his hands? Was it not possible to explain and clear himself, or to recall the child to his protection after a brief absence? A single thought was sufficient to sweep away these questionings, and that was a thought of his wife. She certainly had not taken very much to the child. It was natural, he said to himself, that dear Annie, loving him as she did, should desire all his attention, and should be anxious about everything which could affect his welfare.

"I must give you up, my little girl," he said, holding her closely, and looking down into the eyes that looked up into his. "But will you remember what I say to you now?"

Her lips faintly syllabled a "yes," which he saw rather than heard.

"Don't tell any one else what I say to you," he said, jealously. "Keep it all for a secret between you and me. Rose, did you know that I saved your life—saved you from dying?"

The pupils of the child's eyes dilated slowly, her lips parted, but without giving utterance to a word, the breath hanging suspended on them, and her brows drew themselves slightly together, as though she was trying to understand or to remember.

"In the first place, you have to thank God," he went on, looking at her steadily, "and next to him, you have to thank me for your life. I shall never forget this, and you must not. It makes a bond between us which nothing must break. I am your

second father, and you are the first child of my heart. However I may love others, and however you may love them, no one may, no one can, come so near to you or to me as we come to each other. Whenever in after years you hear my name, think, but do not say, 'He saved my life, and I must not forget him.' Whatever you may propose to do of importance, remember that there is one who has a claim on you, and do not make a promise without consulting me? Will you remember?"

"Yes," said the child.

"And now," he went on, smiling again, "cheer up, and tell me how much you love me."

"I love you," she said, hesitatingly, sitting upright, drawing a full breath, and looking about as if in search of something to measure her love by, "I love you so much as I can't measure."

"God bless you, my white Rose!" exclaimed her protector, unwonted tears dimming his eyes.

The two drove about five miles through the lovely green roads and lanes, and then for a half mile or so the houses disappeared, and they were shut in by over-arching trees that brushed the top of their carriage. Presently, through the sound of sweeping leaves, and bird-songs, and babbling of brooks, fell a sudden soft clash of music that seemed to come from the skies,—a chime of bells, clear and sweet, set all the air ringing about them. With a start and an involuntary smile of delight, the little girl raised her eyes, and saw, near by and high up over the trees, the top of a square tower in which these golden-toned bells were swinging. It appeared and disappeared like a vision, as their carriage spun over the ground, and in a minute more they turned into a broad highway and came out in front of a stately edifice, that stood back, with gardens, a lawn and an avenue in front. This building was lofty in itself, having four stories with a deep basement, and consisted of a square central edifice with tower and cupolas, and two long wings, and it was placed so as to have a yet more commanding appearance, being on a rise graduated into two deep terraces. Fine old trees stood in groups, adorning but not shading the house and grounds too much; flowers bloomed in beds around the terraces, and in large garden vases placed on the walks; there were glimpses of grapery,

greenhouse, and extensive gardens and orchard in the rear of the buildings. Everything was in exquisite order; and, early as it was, the windows were all open, and the curtains half drawn, having that look which indicates that the rooms within are arranged for the day. The wide gate leading into the avenue was open; and there Doctor Thayer entered, drawing his horse back to a walk, and presently stopping for a moment as the sound of singing came through the open windows of a room in one of the wings.

"Listen!" he whispered.

And, with her pale cheek against his sleeve, Rose listened. A choir of female voices was singing an invocation to the Holy Spirit.

*"Veni, Creator Spiritus,
Mentes tuorum visita,
Imple superna gratia
Quae tu creasti pectora,
Qui Paracletus diceris,
Donum Dei altissimi,
Fons vivus, ignis, charitas,
Et spiritalis unctio!"*

"Is n't that sweet, little one?" asked the gentleman, smiling to cheer the child. "You will hear singing like that every day. And see what a fine house you will live in! Don't you feel glad, now, for coming?"

Rose shook her head, unable to speak.

"Well, it can't be helped. We must say good-by. Say it to me now, while we are alone. Good-by, and God bless you, my dear, sweet little white Rose!"

He put his arm about her; and she clung to him, silent, and trembling violently,—clung as though she would never let him go, her small arms clasping his neck, her cold little forehead pressed lovingly to his cheek.

"Good-by!" she whispered, after a moment, and, in speaking, suddenly released him, sinking back in the carriage, but holding his hand, which she kept clasped to her neck, with her cheek turned sideways, and pressed to it,—a gesture expressive of adoring fondness.

In a few minutes they reached the central flight of steps that mounted the first terrace, where Doctor Thayer fastened his horse, and, lifting Rose from the carriage, led her up to the lofty portico, and rang the door-bell. It was answered presently by a woman dressed in the garb of a *religieuse*,

who held the door open, and silently motioned the visitors to enter, conducting them across a long, airy hall, of which the floor was bare and white, into a prettily furnished parlor. There, having motioned the doctor to a chair, and smilingly advanced a stool for Rose, she stood with downcast eyes, awaiting orders.

"I would like to see the superior," said the doctor.

"She is in the chapel now," the nun answered, in a low, soft voice, which was in keeping with her gentle movements, and modest, downcast face. "I will tell her as soon as she comes out."

"Very well: I will wait."

The nun bowed slightly, and withdrew with a noiseless step.

After she had gone, Rose pushed the stool to Doctor Thayer's elbow, and, seating herself on it, took his hand, and again held it clasped between cheek and shoulder, her breath coming quickly, and a faint color beginning to flicker in her face. Neither of them said a word; but they sat there, the child clinging to the friend she was so soon to lose, that friend looking down on her with a pang of pity and tender regret.

Presently the door was softly opened, and the superior of the house came in, smiling pleasantly, her manner showing that mingling of sweetness and dignity which we so often observe in those whose vocation is religious. Her age might have been fifty. She was large and noble-looking, with a somewhat patrician cast of features, clear, steady eyes of deep blue, and a mouth that seemed to smile even when closed, so sweet were its curves.

"I am the superior," she said simply, saluting her visitor with unconscious stateliness, as he rose to meet her.

Doctor Thayer gave her name, which she had heard before, and told his whole story, omitting nothing. He was not in the least afraid that the gentle *religieuse* would feel herself called on to have him arraigned for grave-robbing, particularly when the fruits of his depredation had been so fair a lamb for her flock.

"I am not a Catholic, madam," he said; "but I am sufficiently well informed to be not only willing but desirous to place this child in your care. Indeed it is only here that the secret of her identity can be preserved. Should any friend of hers ever appear, I shall of course give up that authori-

ty and responsibility which I now assume. I shall pay for the child's board and tuition, and expect to be consulted about anything of importance which may be proposed for her, and informed if she should be sick, or if anything should happen to her. For the rest, I desire that you will use your own judgment. Let her have every advantage which your establishment affords, and be fitted to become a teacher in case it should become necessary at any future time that she should do anything toward her own support."

"I am to bring the child up a Catholic?" asked the superior.

The doctor paused, and hesitated a moment. His religious opinions were of the most liberal sort. He was what might be called a full-blown Unitarian, which is about as near an entire losing of dogmas as can well be. Mrs. Burkhardt, who was a candle-and-incense Puseyite, taking all the husk of Catholicism, and leaving the kernel, had been used to call the doctor an infidel, whatever that may be. Perhaps he was an infidel,—there certainly were a good many things which he did not believe; but he liked religion in a woman, though it might incline her a little to superstition. A man, even the most freethinking, rather likes that his lady friends should believe more than he does; if for nothing else, that he may show his superior wisdom by laughing at their little amiable credulity. Besides, the doctor regarded this child as exceptional. His imagination was excited about her, both her person and circumstances; and believing one religion to be about as good as another, taking, moreover, an æsthetic view of the matter, he was inclined to believe that the Catholic faith was the one best suited to his little charge. He could easily fancy her, gliding, with her fitful, graceful step, past walls adorned with pictured saints, putting her small hands palm to palm, to pray to her guardian angel, raising those deep and brilliant eyes of hers to follow the wreaths of incense till they faded among the cherubim on the ceiling.

"After all," he said, laughing, "what use would it be for me to say no? There would be an atmosphere about her life which would influence her, even if no direct instruction were to be given. Besides," he added more gravely, "such a prohibition would be in some measure destructive of

perfect confidence between you and the child; and I am very anxious, madam, that you should be to her in place of the mother she has lost. I want her to find here a happy home."

The superior's expressive face thanked and assured him still more than her few earnest words.

"I shall feel a peculiar interest in the child," she said; "not so much from her orphan state and attractive appearance, as because of her history. One whom God has so signally distinguished by raising her from the grave, almost by a miracle, must be destined for a singular fate."

A few words settled the pecuniary part of the arrangement. Doctor Thayer was to send the pay, and the superior was not to send any acknowledgment for it. In case by any accident the remittance did not reach her at the proper time, she was to write to him within a week to that effect, her note, like all communications from her, to be sent, not by mail, but by a trusty messenger, who was to deliver it into the doctor's own hands, and to no one else.

Doctor Thayer had a double reason for this arrangement, the second one of which made him feel a little guilty. The arrangement made at home had been that the child should be given to the nuns to adopt and do as they pleased with, he retaining no authority, and paying no expenses; but since she had clung so to him, and he had found how hard it would be to renounce all influence over the fate of one bound to him by such peculiar ties, and to give her up so utterly that he would have no right to make even an inquiry for her, he had changed his mind. The only way to keep any hold on her was by paying her expenses, and that he instantly resolved to do. But he as instantly decided to say nothing at home about this change in his plans.

"It would only worry and annoy Annie," he thought. "She can't understand how I feel, and does not see why I should care anything about the child, and I can't change. It is better to avoid discussion."

"Has she been baptized?" the superior asked.

The doctor did not know, and had no means of finding out.

"You would wish her to be christened Rose?" was the next question.

"Yes, and I would like to add a name, if it is customary."

"Oh, she can take as many names as you like," said the superior.

Doctor Thayer bent smilingly over the child, who still nestled closely to his side, and lifting her face with his hand, asked, —

"Would my little girl like to have me name her Rose Blanche? She is too white to be only a Rose, which should be pink. May I name you Blanche, dear?"

"Yes," whispered Rose, with unsmiling lips.

There seemed nothing else to do but to intrust to the superior the souvenirs of Rose's mother which Mrs. Burkhardt had kept, and to take leave of the child.

"Please write me a line after a few days, and let me know how she is contented," the doctor said, rising. "I think that she will attach herself to the place and to you. but I shall feel anxious till I learn."

He clasped tightly the little hand that held his in its soft, clinging hold, held up the small face, and looking steadily into it for one moment, kissed the child, forehead, cheek and mouth, and suddenly released her. With her habit of obedience to and dependence on him, Rose did not at first comprehend his meaning, and did not resist him when he put her away. He bowed hastily to the superior, and went out of the room and out of the house. But as his hand was on the knob of the outside door, he heard a step running after him over the bare floor of the hall, and as the door closed behind him, and he stood on the steps, fastened out by the spring lock, a cry rang through the oaken panels, — not loud, but sharp, and full of anguish. Then there was silence.

"It is a shame!" exclaimed Doctor Thayer, turning to open the door again. But it resisted his hand. He stood a moment irresolute, listening; but no sound came to his ear. "It is cruel that a child should be made to suffer so!"

He put his hand on the bell-knob, but hesitated before ringing; and that moment of hesitation showed him the folly of going back, if he was not going to take Rose away with him. He walked uneasily to and fro on the wide veranda, and after a few minutes, seeing one of the nuns near an open window, he spoke to her.

"How is the child?"

"The poor little thing is recovering," was the reply. "She is with the superior."

"Did she faint?" he asked, quickly.

"Yes, sir."

"I will wait till she is quiet," he said, decidedly. "Please let me know presently."

He walked to and fro again with a troubled face, and after a while the nun appeared at the window and beckoned him. He softly approached and looked in. The superior sat in an arm-chair, holding the child on her lap; the little face was laid close to her bosom. It was evident that she was quiet.

"She has found a friend," the doctor thought, looking with a feeling of relief and yet of pain.

The superior raised her eyes and gave him a smiling nod. He bowed, and turning away, went down the steps, got into his carriage, and drove down the avenue.

After petting and soothing the child a few minutes, the superior set her upright, and patting her pale cheek, said, cheerfully, —

"Now my little girl must go and have some breakfast. I have a pretty playmate for her here. Will she come now?"

Poor Rose had no will of her own, and could only permit herself to be led up the great stairway, through a long upper hall with bare floor like the lower one, and into a large dormitory that crossed the end of it and occupied one of the wings. Both hall and dormitory had a bare look, but were fresh, airy, and exquisitely clean. The dormitory had windows at each extremity, and rows of little white-curtained beds at each side and down the centre. The doors stood open into the wash-rooms adjoining, showing the long line of faucets, each one with a basin underneath, the racks for towels, and the countless drawers and pigeon-holes that lined the walls. The superior led Rose to one of the beds, drew the curtain aside, and displayed a little girl lying there with a thin, pale face and cropped hair, but with the brightness of returning health in her eyes. The child smiled gladly at sight of the nun, and kissed the hand that was offered her.

"Here is a little girl who also has been sick," the superior said, lifting Rose and setting her on the bed beside the other. "And now you two are going to have breakfast together. One is Rose, and the other is Lily. You must be very fond of each other, and see which will get strong and well first."

Smiling kindly on them, she wisely left them to become acquainted in their own way. For a minute they were silent, the sick child shyly regarding Rose, and Rose looking off with swimming eyes toward the windows. At length, Lily ventured, in the sweet, hesitating way of a bird learning to sing, —

"I'm real glad we're to have breakfast, are n't you?"

Rose looked with wan and listless surprise at the speaker. Breakfast was the thought furthest from her mind. With her heart full of grief, and strange, tragical images floating vaguely before her mind, — images that might well, if understood, appal the stoutest mind, — Rose had but little consciousness of any bodily wants.

"We shall have strawberries, I think," continued Lily, more confident now that the ice was broken. "Sister Anastasia told me that she should n't be surprised if I had some, and of course you will too."

Rose drew a long, tremulous sigh, and began to look about her, and take note of things.

"Is n't this a splendid place?" asked the other, determined to talk.

Rose sighed out a "Yes."

"All the other girls got up early, and are down in the garden," Lily went on. "I sleep late because I have been sick. At ten o'clock I shall be dressed and go out and walk on the terrace, or down the graspery. Will you go with me?"

Here there was a faint rattling of dishes above the rustling of trees, and a nun appeared at the door carrying a waiter, and followed by the superior, who brought a little stand and placed it before the children. Sure enough, there were strawberries, two small saucers full, strewn over with sugar, and with a spoonful of cream in each. Two cups of chocolate and two generous slices of buttered bread completed the breakfast.

Whether it was the novelty of her situation, the gentle cheerfulness of her companions, or some re-action in herself, Rose presently felt disposed to think eating not only possible but desirable, and after a while managed to eat nearly all of her breakfast, giving half her slice of bread to the famished little convalescent.

After leaving them to loiter and chatter for a while over their food, the superior came back.

"You are to have the bed next to Lily's,

Rose," she said. "And now you may come with me and see your place in the wash-room. You are to have this pigeon-hole for your own, and these two drawers; and when your trunk comes, I will show you what things to put in them. This is your basin, and you are to hang your towel here. Now go back and stay with Lily, and presently I will take you both out to walk."

A week later, a note was handed to Doctor Thayer, in his office.

"Your patient is doing very well," the superior wrote. "She gains in strength and cheerfulness, is perfectly at ease with me, and has become attached to a little girl whom I have given her for a playmate. The friend I have chosen for her is Lily Raymond, an orphan of Southern parentage, who has no near friends, and who spends her vacations with us. I think you may feel perfectly easy about the child."

The doctor read the note twice, then twisted it up and carefully burnt it.

RAISED FROM THE DEAD.

BY MISS CAMILLA WILLIAN.

[NO. 3.—COMPLETE IN FOUR NUMBERS]

CHAPTER V.

One year stole away, days and nights succeeding each other as silently as light and shadow chase across the landscape; and another year followed in its tracks, and another and another, till ten years are gone since that morning when little Rose and Lily, little now no longer, ate their first breakfast together in the dormitory of the convent-school of the Sisters of Notre Dame, in Saxon. Whatever changes may have come to people, places are not noticeably different, and we might walk up the avenue to Rose Hall and fancy that but a day had passed since Doctor Thayer went up there to call on the lady of the house for some trinkets belonging to a poor little pauper in whom he was interested. Perhaps the trees have a more stately growth, the shrubs are fuller, the hedges finer; but the wide door stands open as then, the wrought-lace curtains hang scarcely swaying in the faint breeze, and the same bird-songs thrill the air, though the same birds do not sing them. It is surely the same lady who stands by one of the lower front windows, holding back the curtain with an imperious arm, as though she had just swept it aside to give some angry command to one who must obey. There is the same white and haughty face, the same wealth of silken black hair, the same hard, bright eyes, and the same fine and stately form. Instead of the rose-colored dress which formerly cast its faint blush on the marble pallor, Mrs. Burkhardt wears a loose morning-robe of white pique elaborately embroidered with black. If the hair is thinned on the top of the lady's head that mark of time's depredations is hidden by the coquettish little barbe of lace which is fastened to her braids with a knot of lavender ribbon, and falls in long embroidered ends to her shoulders. Though nearly fifty years of age, Mrs. Burkhardt can yet be captivating when she chooses; and it must be owned that she sometimes chooses of late. These lingering

signs of lavender and black embroideries are all that is left of her widow's weeds. Mr. Burkhardt has been three years dead.

It would seem that the lady was expecting some one; for after looking out a while, she dropped the curtain, and began walking the room, glancing from the windows whenever she passed them, and keeping a close look-out on the avenue. The deep awnings over the two windows shade the room, which, looking westward, has none of the morning sunshine; but it had a rich, deep-hued atmosphere of its own. The pale-violet-tinted walls are nearly covered with paintings, only occasionally relieved by a rare wood-engraving, the carved front of a tall cabinet, a chimney-piece of black Egyptian marble, or a bracket holding some bronze ornament; the vases are profuse and richly colored, the violet-ground carpet, with its softly blended black and amber figures, the violet satin draped chairs and sofas, all steep the air with their color, till even the green and gold of the June morning outside looks pale. Perhaps in a purer and more searching light one might see marks of wrinkles in the corners of the lady's eyes, or some other delicate sign of coming age; but in the rich dusk of the room she looks immortal. Even the anger and excitement which is evidently quivering in every nerve of her form gives her a more youthful look, by chasing away that languor which ever comes with years.

At length, after she had paced the room impatiently for nearly half an hour, she paused and listened, for there was a faint sound of light wheels in the avenue; and in a few minutes a glittering little top-buggy drawn by a beautiful bay was driven up to the steps, and a gentleman alighted and tossed the reins into the hands of a colored servant, who had come immediately forward on hearing him.

Looking at this gentleman as he ascends the steps with prompt but unhurried feet, we may realize the flight of ten years since we last saw him. It is Doctor Eugene Thayer.

er; but not the bridegroom smiling at his bride's crown of cherry-blossoms, nor the kind young doctor taking his little orphan charge to the convent. The man looks his full forty years, and you can see that they have not been forty years of play. Ten years of severe study and of faithful practice in the science of fighting disease and death in the myriad forms which they assume to attack the citadel of life will leave their mark; and Doctor Thayer has had other wearing influences at work on him beside this professional wear and tear. But there are few persons who would look on him with less pleasure now than ten years ago. The face is thin; but it is the thinness of the finely wrought statue, and not one ignoble tool has cut its line there. A young person may have physical beauty; but a refined mind requires time to imprint its higher beauty on the features. Ten years ago, the expression of the doctor's face, when in repose, was thoughtful: now it has added melancholy to thoughtfulness. No ray of brightness has gone from his eyes; but they are, perhaps, more steady and less flashing. His whole manner has changed, except that prompt way which is essential, and a feature of mind as well as of body. There is less play of expression; the smile is slow to come; the manner is more reserved and cold; though gentle, the words few. To intimate friends, or the rare persons who suit him, he can unbend, and be as easy and more charming than ever; but the doctor's patients and ordinary acquaintances stand a little in awe of him. Careless rings of dark hair curl about his head, and his beard is all shaven except a long mustache, beloved of the ladies, who never weary of the way in which it turns back so as to hide the composed mouth, yet at the ends droops in a silken tress below the chin. This mustache is the doctor's only sign of dandyism, unless his exquisite neatness may be classed under that head. "A frequent bath and clean linen are indispensable to a physician," he would say; and he acted on his maxim.

Servants appeared as if by magic at the Hall. One never had to ring a bell there on approaching. An obsequious quadron rose from the earth, as it were, as you drove up the steps, his hand extended to take the reins from yours; the doors opened as you approached them: it was as if your unspoken wishes were audible to the dwellers

there. One was not without an uncomfortable feeling that privacy was impossible at the Hall, and that any minute, however inopportune, a dusky-faced afrite might start up at one's elbow. One of these noiseless beings appeared just inside the open door as Doctor Thayer entered, and, bowing low, informed him that Mrs. Burkhardt was in the sunset room, so named on account of a beautiful painting of an Italian sunset which adorned its walls. There he found the lady, absorbed, apparently, in examining rose-petals through a microscope.

"Clarence," she said, without looking up, on hearing a step, "I sha'n't go to town to-day. Cousin Margaret wants me to sit with her. So you needn't wait. O doctor!" with a charming little air of surprise, "I thought it was Clarence. How noiselessly you came! Your wheels must be tired with velvet. Or did you walk?"

"I drove," the doctor replied, with a courteous greeting.

As he came up the avenue, his sharp eyes had plainly seen the lady pacing her room, and had seen her white dress pause a moment before the window as he came round the near turn at the wing of the house.

"What does she want to make such a pretence for?" he thought, coolly looking her over, and calmly admiring her faultless make-up.

"At the microscope?" he remarked, with a glance at her occupation. "That is our modern substitute for the enchanted carpet: it transports us into a new world."

Mrs. Burkhardt laughed lightly.

"I am simply consoling myself," she said. "Chancing to look at my own hand through the glass, I was horrified at its course appearance; and I can only regain my own self-respect by proving to myself that the rose-petals are quite as rough."

She took up one of the petals from the table beside her, and, dropping it to the delicate palm of her hand, smilingly contemplated it.

The doctor smiled lightly also; but there was a spice of cynicism in his expression as he marked the coquetry of her action.

"The petal has the worst of it," he said, with the air of a man who knows that he is expected to pay a compliment.

The lady tossed the flowers aside, and became grave immediately.

"I have a childish habit of trifling when I am anxious," she said, with dignity.

"And I am very uneasy and very much annoyed this morning. I wish to speak to you about it."

The gentleman signified that he was all attention. Indeed, Doctor Thayer respected Mrs. Burkhardt when she proceeded to business. She had a clear, prompt way, and showed more coolness and common sense than women are always in the habit of displaying when they are interested in the subject under discussion.

"You have not forgotten what I told you years ago about the death of that Mrs. Paulier who was here to nurse Cousin Margaret? Well, I had almost forgotten it, when suddenly it was recalled to my mind in the most unexpected manner. I was at Mrs. General Summerville's yesterday. She has just returned from the South. She told me that about six weeks ago she received a letter from my cousin, Mr. Stanley, of England. The letter was directed to O—, and forwarded to her. He wrote to make inquiries concerning this same Mrs. Paulier, — having, he said, just heard that she once nursed Mrs. Summerville. Now, the fact that Mr. Stanley should inquire about this person does not surprise me, — I should not be surprised at his knowing or inquiring about any one, or at anything he might do. He is a most unaccountable being. But the fact of any person asking for her now of course makes me uneasy. What can I say if asked concerning the manner of her death? Since poor Dr. Marston's death, no one knows the particulars except yourself, me, Cousin Margaret, my housekeeper, and the apothecary's son Thomas. What am I to do? It is really very embarrassing. I shall never cease to regret that I did not put aside my dislike of vulgar scandal, and have the matter made public at the time. I cannot imagine what should have made me so indiscreet, except that I was too much shocked by the occurrence to know well what I was about. What ought I to do?"

Mrs. Burkhardt, in the effort to control and hide her own agitation, did not notice that a swift flush had passed over her companion's face, and that he checked an eager impulse to speak.

When she had finished speaking, he had himself in hand again.

"It is impossible for me to dictate your course," he replied quietly, his eyes dwelling steadily on her pallid face. "It is very unlikely that any one will apply to me for

information. I was not your physician at the time. You must really use your own judgment in the matter."

The lady frowned angrily.

"I shall then repeat that she died of cramps," she said, with a defiant air; "and, if you choose, you can put me to the lie. It would be simply absurd to tell the story now, even if the woman's own father should come. It seems likely that Mr. Stanley has come across some friend of hers."

Did Mrs. Summerville answer Mr. Stanley's letter? the gentleman asked.

"Yes, and without a word to me. She wrote him that Mrs. Paulier died suddenly at my house. What a position that places me in!" she exclaimed fiercely.

"No one could suppose that you were in any way interested in Mrs. Paulier's death," remarked the doctor, with apparent carelessness, but in reality watching every look and motion of the woman before him.

She started, and a spark shot from her eyes.

"What do you mean?" she cried.

"Simply what I say," was the quiet reply. "Of course the fact that you did not tell the truth at first about this affair would make it awkward to tell it now; but it would seem that nothing more can be imputed to you than an error of judgment. I do not perceive how you are to be seriously compromised. Of course, if your cousin is the one to make the inquiries, you can easily explain it to him."

Mrs. Burkhardt sighed impatiently. She did not care to say that her cousin was precisely the one to whom she would least like to explain the story of Mrs. Paulier's death.

"It is then probable that Mrs. Paulier's family are in search of her," the doctor remarked, as though he felt obliged to say something, and did not know what else to say.

"It would seem so," the lady replied shortly.

Then she lifted her eyes full to his, and said sternly, —

"Doctor Thayer, I blame you for this, and my opinion is that you can explain it. To whom did you send the watch and miniature I gave you?"

His look of surprise more than half disarmed her angry suspicions.

"You mistake!" he said decidedly. "I did not send, I gave them to the person who had a right to them. That person was not

Mr. Stanley, nor any one connected with him, so far as I know or can judge. I am as much astonished as you can be at Mr. Stanley's making any inquiries about the lady. I have heard that she was a lady. I would furthermore say that I have never told how Mrs. Paulier died. When, if ever, I feel obliged to tell it, I shall inform you of my intention. I cannot be suspected of working in any sly or underhand manner, — though no one can deny my right to keep my own secrets; and the secrets of others, when I become possessed of them."

"Certainly! I did not mean to insinuate any suspicion of you," she said immediately.

Doctor Thayer rose.

"Shall I see Miss Fairfield now?"

And he left the room, scarcely waiting for the affirmative nod which answered him.

He was the Hall physician, and had visited Miss Fairfield daily for the last three months. There was no need of any great ceremony, therefore, in making his calls.

Mrs. Burkhardt looked after him with a lowering face as he left the room.

"How that man baffles me!" she muttered. "Here I have been trying for ten years to find out whom he knows belonging to her, and have failed. But I believe he tells the truth, — he is too much of a gentleman not to."

She got up, and walked uneasily to one of the windows, looking out, but seeing nothing, her face full of irritation and something very like fear.

"What a fool I was not to have had that apothecary prosecuted!" she muttered, clenching her hand in the lace curtain that fell about her. "If it must come out now, it would place me in a frightful position. That old fool is capable of believing that I got her poisoned. I don't know but Doctor Thayer would think it possible. Men are such villains themselves, the moment they know that one woman hates another, and has reason to wish her out of the way, they are ready to believe anything. I am glad that the creature and her child are dead; but I have not yet become a mixer of doses."

Mrs. Burkhardt spoke truly. When her own interests were concerned, she could be hard and unjust, she could shield tacitly the sins of others, and could be guilty of almost any sin of omission, if the temptation was

sufficient; but she could not commit a crime which no sophistry could excuse. An overt act was something which she could not glose over.

Miss Fairfield found the doctor rather absent that day. He did not give, she thought, his customary attention to her daily aches and pains. Neither did he entertain her with that brief *resumé* of the news of the day with which he had been wont to favor her. He even showed signs of impatience when she began to tell her dreams of the night before.

"I feel as though something particular is going to happen," she said; "for last night I dreamed of troubled water, — waves running high, and dashing over ships and bridges. You may think that dreams are nothing, doctor; but with me they are always followed by something."

"I do not doubt it," replied the doctor dryly.

The invalid went on, without perceiving any mockery in the tone of this remark.

"I remember well how I dreamed three nights in succession of a wedding before that poor Mrs. Paulier died at our house, twelve years ago. And the very night her little girl died at the poor-house, I dreamed about her, — thought I saw her mother pointing into an open grave, and trying to hold the child back, while the little thing kept smiling and walking straight toward it. I thought that if she should step into that grave, the earth would fall on her, and she would be buried alive. The very next day I heard of her death."

Doctor Thayer looked at his patient with mingled astonishment and suspicion. Was it possible that there could be such a striking coincidence between dreams and realities? or was the woman probing him?

He soon perceived that his latter guess was incorrect. Nothing was further from the gentle invalid's thought than either the desire or ability to try him so, or the knowledge which could prompt that desire. He saw that he had merely added one more illustration of the saying that there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of in our philosophy. A sense of honor prevented him from yielding to his desire to encourage Miss Fairfield to gossip on this subject. She was garrulous, and had perfect faith in him; but if there was ever to be a time when he should ask information of any one in Mrs. Burkhardt's

house without first consulting Mrs. Burkhardt herself, that time had not yet come. He had a far more valuable source of knowledge in Mr. Stanley, with whom he proposed to communicate at once.

"There is no accounting for dreams," he said, rising.

And, with this trite remark, he took his leave, and went down-stairs.

Mrs. Burkhardt stood on the piazza as he went out, but did not seem disposed to detain him.

"I find that you have a sibyl in your house," he said, as he lifted his hat in passing. "Miss Fairfield has dreamed a dream."

He stepped into his buggy, bowed again to the lady looking after him, and drove swiftly down the avenue. Near the entrance-gate he met an open carriage driving up to the house. It contained an old gentleman whom he had never seen before, he thought. This stranger was about fifty years of age, hale and keen-eyed, and, in passing, he favored the doctor with a glance like an arrow.

"Pretty good eyes," thought the doctor coolly, for it had been Greek meeting Greek.

Dismissing the incident from his mind, he drove rapidly homeward. His home was the same little cottage where we first saw him; but there have been various changes and improvements made there during the last ten years. More land has been added, a stable built, and a conservatory run along the south side next the parlors. Everything shows taste, and, though the place is not imposing, there is an evidence that money is not lacking. Indeed, there are many who wonder, and have long wondered, why Doctor Thayer does not buy a statelier mansion, — though nothing can be more charming than this little retreat.

In its small way, Vine Cottage is as admirably ordered as the Hall. A man stepped out of the garden, — where he had been tying rose-vines, — as the doctor came up, and, with a respectful bow, took the doctor's horse.

"Any calls, Tim?"

"No, sir."

"Put him up, then."

Going directly into the house, the doctor passed through the long, airy parlor to a small room in the rear which he used as a study. There were his books, and there he wrote his letters, and there he retired when

he wished to be alone. Not that he was much troubled for solitude; for, save when Charles Wilson came out to stay over night or to dine with him, or Meeta Coolidge came once a year with her two children to spend a week, or when he invited some occasional guest, Doctor Thayer dwelt alone with his servants. Poor Anne Thayer, weak, selfish, but loving, had died before she had been a year married, — died in the full flush of happiness, and before she had ever seriously saddened her husband's heart, or embittered her own. Her few faults were all forgotten by him, and only her virtues and her love for him were borne in mind.

"Poor child!" her husband used to sigh when he thought of her.

That word told the story. To him she had been as a child; gentle, simple, unreasonable, and loving, but no companion nor help-meet. He had no desire to marry again in a hurry, and, with years and added culture, had been more fastidious and hard to please.

But the place was lonely, and the doctor seldom crossed his threshold without a sigh. *This time, however, he forgot all loneliness, having a troop of thoughts for company.*

"How could I have become so listless about that child, — that young lady, she is now?" he thought aloud. "Clearly, something is about to be revealed. I must write to Mr. Stanley at once. Heaven grant it may not be too late!"

With anxious haste, the doctor unlocked and opened a secretary, and took out a package of letters. They were the letters which he had received twice a year from the convent ever since he had placed Rose Paulier there. The first fourteen, received in seven years, were merely acknowledgments of remittances, and a few lines from the superior, stating that her charge was well, and doing well. The next one informed him that Miss Rose, being sixteen, and old enough and capable of teaching, desired his permission to be independent, and remain at the convent as a teacher. She could now pay her own way there. The doctor had consented, but urged that she would consider him a friend, and continue to inform him of her progress. The next letter had been from the young lady herself, — a mere line formally stating that she was well, and that the next year her salary would be so much increased that she would be able to commence repaying him the mon-

ey he had advanced for her education. This letter he had answered in a very stiff way. He had not expected nor desired the money to be repaid, he said, and should feel hurt if she insisted. Still, he had no intention to dictate to the young lady.

After that, there had not been a word till that very spring, in March. Then two letters came, — one from the superior, and one from her young charge. Rose desired to become a nun, but did not think it right to do so without first informing him; and the superior assured him that she had no doubt of the girl's vocation, and did not believe her resolution to be from any excitement of feeling, but the result of a conviction that such a life was best suited to her. To these communications he had answered that Rose was in no way under his authority, and was old enough to choose for herself. He earnestly recommended, however, that she would see something of the world before deciding to give it up. That was all he had heard or written.

He took up this last letter from Rose, and read it over in the full glow of newly awakened interest and feeling. It had been received when he was very much pre-occupied, and had dwelt in his mind but a brief time. It was a pretty letter, neatly folded, well-written, — altogether answering the doctor's idea of what a young lady's letter should be. Something sweet and gentle in the tone of it — something sad, too, but with a constitutional, not conscious, melancholy — struck him as he read it this second time. He paused, too, over one sentence which he had not noticed at first: —

"I promised you when I came here that I would never do anything of importance without first consulting you. Perhaps *you* have forgotten this promise, — but *I* have not."

It all came up before him, — the drive on that June morning, and the pale little cheek pressed against his breast, while, with an earnestness which woke a new echo in his heart when he remembered it, he had required that promise from her. It all came back. "You may have forgotten, but I have not." It sounded like a reproach.

In all these ten years Doctor Thayer had not once seen Rose. At first there had been reasons why he could not; later, he had seen no reason why he should. The convent was scarcely a place for a gentleman to call, particularly when he could give no

explanation to the world for his going there; and they had not seemed to expect him. For ten years he had lived within six miles of this girl, whom he had called the first child of his heart, and had not once set eyes on her.

"I will go this afternoon," he said; "and now for my letter."

The letter was written, sealed, and directed to Mr. Stanley; and there the writer stopped, remembering that he must get that gentleman's address, — a somewhat embarrassing necessity, since there was no one to ask but Mrs. Burkhardt. Tomorrow would have to do for that. Then the doctor rang the bell, and ordered his dinner to be an hour earlier than usual, and that his carriage should be at the door immediately after dinner. This little household moved like clock-work, and at precisely four o'clock the tinkle of a bell announced that dinner was served. At the same instant the door-bell rang.

"I cannot see any one unless the business is of importance," the doctor said to the servant, as he went through the entry.

Presently the girl came into the dining-room with a card in her hand.

"The gentleman says his business is of importance, sir," she said; "and he would like to see you a moment to arrange for a future interview, if you cannot attend to him now."

The doctor glanced over the card, and read, "Samuel A. Markham, Attorney, London." His eyes sparkled as he read.

"Is he a fresh-faced, white-haired man, with very sharp eyes?" he asked.

"Yes, sir."

"Keep the dinner hot, then, Ann, and add something to it. Perhaps the gentleman will dine with me."

Doctor Thayer found his visitor standing, hat in hand. A gentleman evidently; rather handsome, now he saw him well, and with a prompt, business-like look about him which suited the doctor admirably.

"The business on which I come may not occupy more than a few minutes," said the stranger briefly, declining the seat the other offered him. "It would be well to ascertain that at once, lest I detain you unnecessarily."

The doctor bowed, and the gentleman proceeded: —

"My card will tell you my name and profession. I have been for many years the

confidential legal adviser of the late Mr. Walter Stanley, of London."

"Late?" exclaimed the doctor, involuntarily, his countenance changing.

"Yes, sir. Mr. Stanley has been dead about a month; and, in obedience to his will, I have come to this country to discover, if possible, some traces of a near relative of his."

Doctor Thayer's eyes flashed up as he repeated the word "relative," and for a moment he forgot his visitor, and stood fixed in thought, putting link to link of the chain of seemingly detached events and incidents.

"I beg your pardon, sir!" he said then. "Pray seat yourself. Or perhaps you will dine with me? I was just seating myself at the table when you came in."

The gentleman smilingly accepted the courtesy, and followed his host into the dining-room. Evidently this grave but fine-faced country physician had something to tell him, and knew what he had come to ask. Business was business, but the Englishman could not help noticing that the dining-room appointments, simple as they were, showed a highly cultivated mind, and an acquaintance with the usages of the best society. He had never before heard of Doctor Thayer; but the feeling of respect with which his clear, keen face had inspired him on their chance meeting in the Hall avenue, was increased by what he saw of his *menage*. A man who had such silver, with such an initial on it, who knew enough to buy such an engraving as hung over the sideboard, whose cook knew how to make a chicken-pie, who, moreover, had the good sense to offer his guest pure native wine instead of counterfeit foreign ones,—such a man Mr. Samuel Markham could conscientiously call a gentleman. The Englishman had been nearly poisoned more than once by the ingenuous hospitality of those who had, on account of his nationality, felt obliged to offer him what they called port wine. He also admired the courtesy of his host, who would not ask an explanation which he was plainly anxious to receive.

Only the preliminaries of their business were spoken of during dinner. Mr. Stanley had died of gout in the stomach; had been suffering from it during several years. He had been intending to come to America in company with his attorney, though against the advice of his physician, and had probably hastened his death by the exertions he

had made to prepare himself for going. He had been many years trying to find out where this relative of his was, had at last got a clew of her, had written to a lady at whose house he had heard of her having been some years before, and had learned from his correspondent that the lady he was in search of had died at Mrs. Burkhardt's. Mr. Stanley had, his attorney owned, been frantic on receiving this news, and had immediately commenced preparations to come to this country, when he was taken worse. He had, however, left his affairs in perfect order, and his wishes clearly expressed.

"I was to make inquiries not only of Mrs. Burkhardt," the gentleman said, "but also of the physician and clergyman who attended Mrs. Paulier in her last illness; also any physician or clergyman in the neighborhood who might be supposed to know anything of the matter. I was to search the records of deaths,—was even to examine the grave where the lady is said to be buried."

"There is then great importance attached to the fact of Mrs. Paulier's death?" the doctor asked quietly.

"Yes, sir," the lawyer replied, closely observing the effect of his words. "Mrs. Paulier was Mr. Stanley's first cousin, and, if living, by his death she becomes heiress to an immense fortune. The Hall in which she is said to have died was but a part of her inheritance."

Doctor Thayer colored slightly at this announcement, but spoke as quietly as before.

"I have no doubt that Mrs. Paulier died at Mrs. Burkhardt's house, as you have been told."

"And that her child died at the poor-house, as also I have been told?" asked the attorney excitedly.

Doctor Thayer was silent.

The lawyer pushed his chair back from the table.

"I brought papers to satisfy Mrs. Burkhardt of my right to make inquiries," he said hastily. "But if you have anything to tell me you have a right to be more particular. Besides, she saw and knew me in town as her cousin's attorney. Will you go with me to the Hall, or into the city? where I can find some sureties, I think."

"I will go to town," the doctor said. "Pardon me if I am too careful," he added, with a slight smile. "As a lawyer, you cannot but own that I err on the right side. Socially I am satisfied. The hesitation is

merely a technical one. There are persons who may suffer damage by what I have to tell you."

"No apology is necessary, sir," the other said heartily, impatient to be off.

"Mrs. Burkhardt must have been astonished to learn the relationship in which Mrs. Paulier stood to her," remarked the doctor, as the two went out.

"She was, sir, very much astonished," the other replied dryly. "She was so much astonished that she refuses to believe it."

"Mrs. Paulier is clearly traced?" was the next question, as they bowled over the ground toward the city. "You are sure of her identity?"

"Oh, yes! We knew all about her and her little girl, and had them fully identified. She had three children,—two boys, who died, and this little girl, who was born a month after Mr. Paulier died. Paulier was a worthless sort of fellow, a musician, who ran away with Rose Stanley, thinking to make a fortune by it. Her father never forgave her, but died in a few years, leaving half his wealth to his nephew, the other half to public charities. The Stanleys are a suborn race. My client was in love with his cousin."

CHAPTER VI.

Of course Doctor Thayer had to postpone his visit to the convent, and the next morning, as he rode through the sweet country roads, he recollected that his second visit was to be made on the anniversary of the first. It was just ten years that very day of June that he had taken his first stealthy morning drive with the child beside him. He went over it all again in his mind,—remembering even how she had watched from his horse up to the reins, from his reins to his hands, then up the sleeve till her bright glance had made its sudden leap to his face. So absorbed was he in this retrospection that he forgot the years that had passed, and as he went up the avenue that led to the convent, and saw a group of children playing on the terrace, he looked eagerly among them for Rose.

"Rose Blanche she was to be named," he thought, scanning them closely as he went up the steps.

"Is there one here named Rose Blanche?" he asked of a bright little girl who stood near.

"There is n't any little girl of that name,"

the child said, smiling; "but there is Sister Rose Blanche."

Doctor Thayer's cheeks grew pale as he turned abruptly away, and ascended to the door. Full of those sweet, sad recollections, his heart had leaped out to meet that child who had once so loved him. It was a momentary shock to be forced to recollect that she was no longer a child, and that personally they were strangers; and it was a still greater shock to think that it might be too late, and that Rose might already have renounced that world which now offered her so brilliant a future. It seemed to him an hour before the door opened,—then he was impatient of that gentle, moderate way of the nuns, though he had formerly admired it; and when the superior came in, she found him, hat in hand, walking up and down the parlor.

"Madam!" he exclaimed, scarcely replying to her greeting, "I am consumed by anxiety. Has the child I left with you become a nun?"

"She will commence her noviciate next week," said the superior tranquilly.

"Thank God I am not too late!" he exclaimed.

Immediately apologizing for his abruptness, he begged the superior to be seated, and took a chair himself.

His interview was a long one. It was not easy for the *religieuse* to give up one to whom she had become so warmly attached, and whom she regarded as likely to become a shining ornament to their order. On the other hand, the doctor was peremptory.

"After all, it is not for you and me, but for her, to decide," the nun said. "But I could wish that she need never know of this."

"Would you deprive her of such advantages?" asked the gentleman, in surprise.

The superior smiled.

"O sir! we poor nuns are not able to see how the glories of earth are brighter than those of heaven; or what advantage a gay and frivolous woman of the world, who spends her time in the pursuit of her own selfish pleasure, has over one who lives a retired, humble, and innocent life,—watching her heart that no sin may enter, instructing children, and forming their minds to virtue, accepting and using her life all for God. We are happy and at peace here, and we know that the world has snares. Here every day we say God chastens those

whom he loves, and in our crosses, if any are imposed, we see our Father's predilection; in the world we might forget that, and fall under the burden."

Doctor Thayer was a man of the world, and though familiar with noble thoughts, and sympathizing with all high and generous sentiments, still, in many things he thought the world's thoughts. He could appreciate the lofty purity of the stand this woman took; but the feeling was not familiar to him. Possibly he had heard similar sentiments from the pulpits; but they had been from the lips of men who had fine, or at least comfortable, houses, who had families, and freedom to go where they would, to whom society and nearly all its pleasures were open. But here was one who practiced what she preached.

"But Rose may not become a frivolous woman of the world. You have educated her here to a nobler life; let her now go out and exercise her influence to purify this society which you fear so much. We want such women."

The superior sighed.

"It is for her to choose," she said.

And, going to the door, she directed a sister who stood in the hall to ask Sister Blanche to come to the parlor.

The doctor was too much agitated to ask why she should be called sister, and breathlessly watched the door by which his former charge was to enter. It opened presently, and a slender figure glided in, and, bowing to him, but without lifting her eyes to his face, went and stood by the superior.

A tremor of surprise and delight ran over the man, as he stood up, involuntarily, at sight of that vision. Blanche she was, — pale of face, but with the milky pallor of a flower that has grown in the shade, and still paler from the black of her coarse robe and veil. For though her noviciate had not yet commenced, she had anticipated the dress as much as was allowed. Ah, the tranquil sweetness of that unspeakably lovely and delicate face! the gliding grace of her motions! the indescribable air of beauty and holiness that hung about her!

"Blanche," the superior said, "this gentleman is Doctor Thayer. He has come to see you."

A faint red bloomed in the girl's cheeks at sound of his name, and her brilliant eyes flashed full in his face, and dwelt there an instant, then dropped, suffused with tears.

She whispered a word to the superior, and, receiving a nod in answer, timidly advanced toward him, with her hand extended.

"You are welcome," she said, with the direct earnestness of a child, letting her hand remain a moment in his clasp. "My one earthly wish was to see you."

"If I had suspected that!" he exclaimed, reddening deeply. "I supposed that I was not expected to call here; and never dreamed that I was desired."

"You know I could never forget *you*," she said, emphasizing the last word, — then timidly withdrew to the superior's side, and sat with her eyes downcast, waiting for them to speak.

"Doctor Thayer brings news for you," the superior said gently. "Relatives of yours have sought you out, and a large fortune is at your disposal."

"Relatives!" repeated the young recluse, lifting her eyes again. "Have I relatives?"

Her manner was perfectly tranquil, but there was a faint tremor in her voice.

The doctor immediately explained that the relative who instituted the search was now dead. "Mr. Walter Stanley," he said.

"Walter!" she repeated. "Then it was he who gave mamma this watch."

She drew it from her belt as she spoke, and, opening it, pointed to the words engraved inside: "Rose, from Walter."

The doctor, a little impatient at the superior's slowness in explaining, took the matter on himself, and in a few forcible words defined her circumstances, the relationship of Mrs. Burkhardt, her own ownership of the Hall, and the position she was called on to take in the world.

She heard him with surprise, but no appearance of elation; there was even an expression of trouble in her face, as she looked thoughtfully down for a moment without speaking.

"I could give the money all away," she said presently, as if seeing a way out of some difficulty. "You could see to it, Sister Veronica," to the superior. "Because, you know, since I am to commence my noviciate next week, I would not wish to have to think of such things."

The superior glanced triumphantly at their visitor. Here was a beautiful young girl who would willingly turn away from all the glories of earth, even when they were at her feet.

"But, my dear," exclaimed the doctor, "you are not going to be a nun?"

The girl raised her white and startled face, and looked from him to the superior.

"That is," he added, "not till you have chosen again, from your new position. You have now other duties and responsibilities, which your conscience should not allow you to renounce. The superior will tell you that your noviciate must now be indefinitely postponed, if not finally abandoned. You are, of course, too inexperienced to understand your duties fully. You would not wish to cast opprobrium on your friends here by allowing the world to say that they enriched themselves at your expense."

The shaft flew, as he had meant that it should.

"Doctor Thayer," said the superior, with quiet dignity, "I would gladly take this girl penniless, as I thought to receive her. But you are right in one thing: Blanche has not experience. I perceive that her noviciate must be indefinitely postponed. If, on fully realizing her new position, she shall still be of the same mind, I shall rejoice: if she should change, I hope to be resigned."

"There will be some legal formalities to go through with," the gentleman continued; "and of course it would not be agreeable, nor, indeed, possible, for the business to be transacted here. It seems to me best that Rose should go to my house. I will send my sister for her at any time you may designate. It was the request of Mr. Samuel Markham, who was appointed her guardian by Mr. Stanley. The will provides that she shall be under guardianship one year after she is found."

Sister Veronica looked with a sad smile at her young friend.

"You see, my dear, that you must submit," she said. "I have no authority, and you are not independent. I can trust, though, that you will not forget me, nor God."

Rose Paulier had taken the superior's hand and clasped it to her bosom, and, while the two were speaking, had stood looking intently at each, a new expression coming into her face and form. She seemed to grow taller, her head was lifted, the sweet lips were pressed a little more closely together, the dark eyes were open, and brilliant with what looked like the first stirrings of pride and will, and her pale cheeks began to burn

with a faint pink which gradually deepened to a vivid crimson. She was indescribably beautiful and imposing. In that few minutes during which she stood there silent, her habit of obedience and entire dependence seemed to slip from her like a garment, and she became a woman capable of thinking and deciding for herself.

"When do you think you would like to go?" the superior asked, watching her attentively.

"I will think about it today, and decide in the morning," the girl replied quietly, giving no sign of a disposition to take advice on the subject.

The interview was becoming constrained and awkward.

Doctor Thayer rose to go.

"I will send Mrs. Coolidge to call on you in the morning, and you can make any arrangements you see fit with her. I shall be happy to have you, under her protection, make my house your home till a more suitable place is made ready for you. It was Mr. Stanley's desire that you should live at the Hall; but there may be some delay in obtaining possession of that. However, I merely called on you as a friend, to announce to you the news of which I was the messenger: the business is now entirely in the hands of your guardian, and all your wishes are to be expressed to him."

Whether by some subtle sympathy she detected the wounded pride and feeling which he veiled carefully under a tone of friendly courtesy, whether she shrank from being completely in the hands of a stranger on her first entrance into the world, or whether her old fondness for and dependence on him was striving in her heart—for whatever reason, the young girl's countenance changed. An earnest softness took the place of its absorbed look, the eyes looked up into his imploringly and timidly.

"Will not you even advise me?" she asked.

"Whenever you may think fit to ask my advice, I shall be most happy to give it, as far as I am able," he replied, smiling, and turning to take leave of the superior. But the smile was not a heart-felt one, and it woke no answer in that sensitive face.

To his surprise, Rose followed him to the door.

"I do not want to go out of here, if I am not to be near you, and have you kind to

me," she said, when he turned, aware that she was beside him.

He had only bowed on taking leave of her; now, with a real smile, which her face reflected, he took her hand.

"If you choose it, I shall be glad," he said.

"And I want all the advice, except in my religion, to come from you," she said. "There is no one in the world who has a right to command me save you."

He did not choose to say a word, in reply to an appeal which so entirely suited him, in presence of any one else. He only smiled again, and, clasping her outstretched hand once more, took his leave.

But it was hardly a happy face which Doctor Thayer wore, as he drove down the avenue.

CHAPTER VII.

A whisper arose in the town of Saxon,—a rumor too wild and strange to be true; yet every one was anxious to know how such an absurd story could have been started. The gentlemen pooh-poohed it, the ladies doubted and buzzed; and meantime it became evident that something really was the matter. Mrs. Burkhardt was not at home to visitors; and the servants, when questioned, merely looked mysterious, and said that their mistress was very much engaged. Next it was ascertained that Doctor Thayer's sister-in-law, Mrs. Coolidge, was at his house, making her yearly visit a full month earlier than usual; and, in the bright moonlight evenings, passers by the cottage saw a slight, black-robed figure walking in the gardens or on the piazza, sometimes accompanied by Mrs. Coolidge, sometimes by the doctor, or perhaps by both. Then Mr. Markham, whom everybody soon found out to be an attorney from England, called at the cottage every day. Finally the whole astonishing story came out,—the heiress marrying against her father's wishes, and discarded in consequence; the long, vain search of her early lover; the strange, sudden death of the lady; the still more strange apparent death and real resuscitation of her child, and all the romantic circumstances of her hiding. It was known that Mrs. Burkhardt utterly refused to believe the girl anything but an impostor, and threatened to contest the case. But scarcely had a deeper and more sinister buzz arisen, with such questions as, "Did she know who Mrs.

Paulier was?" "What did the woman die off?" "Was the pretended death and the hiding for the child's safety?" and others similar, before it was announced that the mistress of the Hall was convinced that the case was not an imposture, and had acknowledged her young relative, and invited her to become her guest till she could give up the house to her sole occupancy. Her carriage had been standing at the gate of the doctor's cottage. But no one saw the face of the lady as she came down the walk, and, stepping into the carriage with the brief order, "Home!" was driven rapidly away. Her veil was pulled too closely, not only for scrutiny, but for recognition.

Mrs. Burkhardt had had a hard time. One would think it hard enough to be obliged to give up this magnificent estate, and the prospect of a still more magnificent fortune, without doing so under such humiliating circumstances.

"Madam," Mr. Markham had said, when she took a high hand with him, "you may say you do not believe in the identity of the child; but you must have known the mother. If we have to contest this matter, inquiries will be made into the manner of Mrs. Paulier's death. It took place at your house and was very sudden. I find that the disease was called cramps, a very vague and unsatisfactory definition."

"My God, sir!" the lady exclaimed, "do you suppose that I murdered the woman?"

"By no means," was the ready answer. "But can you prove that you did not? The circumstances are very awkward, and, preposterous as such an accusation would be, can you prove it to be false? Your position and character would be no screen. You must know, madam, that no one can stand so high but suspicion and scandal may touch them."

"And so," she cried, "I have got to give up, without a word, a home which has been mine for twenty-six years, and take a young adventuress by the hand, and acknowledge her as a relative, for fear the rabble may accuse me of crimes which never entered into my heart to commit!"

Mr. Markham rose, took his hat and gloves, and made a very stiff bow to the lady.

"We will put to the proof my ward's title to be called an adventuress," he said, coldly.

The end of the matter was, that Mrs.

Burkhardt was suddenly convinced by the proofs shown her, and was devoured by impatience to embrace her young relative, whose natural protectress she was. Why should Rose be in the house of those people, who were nothing to her? But Rose had put a stop to all that.

"I do not know any friends but Doctor Thayer, Mrs. Coolidge, and my guardian," she said; "and I am perfectly comfortable here. Do not hurry about leaving the house. I have no desire to take possession of it for some time. Please stay there this summer if you like."

Rose had tried to be cordial, but had succeeded very poorly. She was afraid of this woman with the pale, smiling lips, and the hard eyes, and an inadvertent remark of her guardian had given her a feeling of vague, incredulous horror toward her.

"The fact that Mrs. Paulier died at her house will be a vise on her," Mr. Markham had said, then, with a glance at Rose, had checked himself.

She did not know, she would not know, what he might mean; but she shuddered at the thought of the woman, and, in spite of herself, had received her advances in the most freezing manner.

"I trust, Mrs. Coolidge," the lady said, as she rose to go, "that you will try to impress on Miss Paulier an idea of the vulgarity of family quarrels. Her circumstances are already so peculiar that good taste requires an avoidance of anything that may attract further attention."

"The young lady, in accordance with her cousin's will, has assumed the name of Stanley," said Mrs. Coolidge, haughtily, not deigning to take any further notice of the other's insulting speech.

Of course such a reception could not be very agreeable to the lady of the manor, and the parting had been as icy as possible, the visitor hastening to hide her face behind her veil.

This unlucky visit of the mother did not, however, prevent any more civilities from the family. That very evening, Mr. Frederick Clarence Lenox Burkhardt opened the gate of the doctor's garden, and walked easily up to where a small party sat on the piazza, enjoying the bright moonlight and the cool, flower-scented breeze. He had time to scan the company fully, as he approached them, for the clear light revealed their positions to him. Doctor Thayer and Mr. Mark-

ham sat together at one end of the veranda; and Mrs. Coolidge, with her little girl leaning on her lap, sat at the other, the child asking her mother some of those puzzling questions which nobody can answer, the mother calling up all her wisdom to satisfy the child, and prevent her guessing, prematurely, that there are some things which even a beautiful and beloved mother does not know. Pacing the veranda between these two, was a young man who bent his head to catch the low-spoken words of a slender girl who looked up ever and anon to meet his look.

"Confound him! he's on the trail!" muttered the approaching visitor, as he recognized Charles Wilson.

"Doctor, I hear that I've got a cousin in your house. May I have the honor of being presented to her?" said the young man, when the doctor rose to meet him.

Mr. Clarence Burkhardt was rather a gay fellow, and, since there was no pecuniary necessity for his adopting a profession or going into trade, he had lived merely a life of pleasure, and on his father's death had sold out his business; this last an unfortunate step, which had caused the following comment in the late Mr. Stanley's will:—

"Since Mr. Clarence Burkhardt does not think it necessary to engage in business, or study a profession, he must be in circumstances which will render any bequest from me unnecessary."

But, after all, there were worse young men than this indolent pleasure-seeker, and Rose Stanley's friends were glad to see him. It looked better that some relative should be on friendly terms with her, and they had nothing against Clarence on her account. He found himself cordially received, both by the family and by Rose, who gave him her hand, and called him Cousin Clarence. He watched her closely in that soft light, and became every moment better satisfied with the programme which his mother had marked out for him.

"If I lose the money, you may win it," she had said. "They will take possession of her, and marry her to that Charles Wilson, if nobody interferes. They have some story of her having been taken sick at the Wilson's, and Charles having carried her in his arms to the poor-house, and catching the fever from her, and nearly dying in consequence. They'll make the most of it; but a mere dry-goods trader will have no

chance, unless you let him. Now is your chance, — before she goes into society, and gets her head turned."

Mrs. Coolidge had persuaded Rose to wear white, which was the only color for which the girl would exchange her black robe; and, plain and nun-like as her nansook robe was, she could bear it without losing her claim to beauty. Only one skirt, with a hem unadorned by either lace or ruffles, long sleeves fastened about the wrists, and a high bodice buttoned closely to her round throat, certainly made a toilet quite severe enough. The loose, rich hair of sunny brown was untwined from the stiff braid into which the little nun had made it, and arranged by Mrs. Coolidge's artistic hands in shining coils about a small jet comb.

She needed no ornament to set off her delicate yet spirited beauty. The play of expression in her changing face, the delicate grace of her manner, in which a naturally lively disposition, impassioned and full of enthusiasm, alternated with the results of her conventual training, the downcast modesty and silence, the humility and self-distrust of one who had looked forward to, and might yet lead, a life of self-denial and poverty and obscure toil. Nothing could be more odd or more charming than these fluctuations in her manner, — never abrupt, but melting into each other with a bright and unconscious variety.

Mr. Clarence Burkhardt was enraptured by what he, hackneyed in the world's ways, considered coquetry, by her friendliness to himself, by the willingness of the family to allow his cousinly claim, — by everything, in short, but the presence of Charles Wilson.

Rose, on her part, was delighted with her two gallants, and puzzled herself, not only then, but afterward, to decide which was the handsomer and the more agreeable. They were strikingly alike, — both tall, fair-haired, blue-eyed, and with features for which one description would do; but the manners and expressions were different. Wilson was proud, Burkhardt supercilious: the one, at twenty-four, still retained some of that boyish blush and roundness of cheeks which had helped make his earlier beauty; the other, at twenty-five, was thin, and of an alabaster whiteness: the eyes of the younger were frank, yet sometimes shy; those of the elder were cool and impenetrable. In fine, Charles Wilson was romantic

and high-hearted, and his friend and rival *blase* and skeptical.

Mr. Burkhardt was so well pleased with his reception that, on taking leave, he proposed to come the next morning, and take Rose and Mrs. Coolidge to drive.

"Thank you," said Rose, who had not yet learned that the fashionable morning is from twelve to two or three; "but I am engaged every morning, and all day tomorrow."

Nothing would have induced her to set aside her morning engagement. At five o'clock she rose, and at half-past five stepped into a close carriage which had been hired on purpose for her, and was driven to the convent. There she heard mass at seven o'clock, breakfasted with her old friends at half-past seven, wandered for a few minutes about her beloved retreat, then started for home at eight. Nothing but a decided storm prevented this drive, and then it was not for herself she cared, but for the driver and horses.

It was but natural that this programme should change after a while. The heiress was young and full of life, and, whatever might be her future course, it was surely as well to see something of that society which eagerly desired to welcome her, and of those gayeties which no one could deny her right to participate in.

A drive of six miles and back in the early morning was rather an exhausting way to begin the day: so after a while it was omitted, — though not without some self-reproaches, — and the horses were brought round in the evening; and, instead of the silent and solitary prayer at dawn of day, she had the concert or play by gaslight. Then the Saxon families began to call at the doctor's, and invitations poured in by scores. Moreover, Rose had found an old friend in O —, — Miss Lily Raymond, her first intimate in the convent, — and Doctor Thayer, ever thoughtful and indulgent, had invited the young lady to become Rose's companion at the cottage.

"You are so good!" said Rose gratefully, when he suggested this invitation to her.

"Do not be too sure that I am not selfish in this," he answered, smiling. "It is many years since my home has been so gay and pleasant as it has been during the last three months. I want to make the most of it while it lasts."

Rose had gone to the doctor's study to

speak to him, and, though he seemed to have no more to say, she still lingered. His time was so much occupied with his profession that it was seldom they met except at dinner, and then there was always company. She wished to see him oftener, to speak to him more freely. He was always kind, but that very kindness made her wish for more. She wanted to talk with him; to tell him all her thoughts,—all her plans and wishes; to learn, also, something of him. She longed to hear him speak of that lost bride, whom she had last seen in the full glory of her morning loveliness and joy; to know if he was very lonely; to hear what he was doing, what he proposed or desired to do, what he thought, what he loved, what he hated. She could only guess it all, and his reserve both piqued and hurt her. Surely she might be trusted, if no other was. So, on this first time for weeks that she had seen him alone, she lingered, hoping that he would detain her. But the doctor, after pleasantly answering her, had returned to the book he was studying, seeming to think that she had gone. She waited a moment, then went quietly out.

As soon as she had gone, he pushed his book back.

"It is very pleasant while it lasts," said he, "but she will get over this fondness for me after she has been in the world a while, and it would be folly in me to allow myself to become attached to her. If she were poor, and I could keep her here as my child,—perhaps marry her to Charles,—then it would do very well; but I must not fancy that my lonely days are over."

He sighed, and leaned his head on his hand.

"I am afraid I have been very unwise," he resumed, after a while. "I was not conscious of my loneliness till I contrasted it with these gay comings and goings. What shall I do when they are all gone? I am afraid I shall have to get married,"—giving a little laugh,— "but to whom?"

He made an impatient exclamation, and resumed his book, a frown and a blush and a half-laugh coming all together. The fact was that there were many ladies who were quite willing to cheer the doctor's loneliness, and he knew it perfectly well; and among them was one at thought of whom, in that connection, his face always reddened in that half-angry, half-ashamed way. Mrs. Burkhardt was ten years older than Doctor

Thayer, and it was too absurd to think of; yet he could not hide from himself that she took particular pains to be captivating to him, and kept him fully aware of her attractions. He did not believe she was in love with him, she never disgusted him with any silly sentimentalities; but she felt the force of his character, she respected and liked him, and she was fascinated by him.

"I dare say she would make a very good wife," he said, and put the subject from his mind.

It was arranged that Mrs. Burkhardt should leave the Hall in the autumn, and Rose persuaded Mrs. Coolidge to take up her abode there, and be castellan. But, before going, the lady of the manor proposed to give a party, at which her young cousin and supplanter should make her *debut* in fashionable life.

This party was a magnificent affair. Mrs. Burkhardt meant to abdicate royally; and, besides, she had several ends which she hoped might be served that night. By displaying herself to this unsophisticated girl as a woman who knew perfectly well all the ways of that world of which Rose was so ignorant, she could obtain an influence over her for the future; then she could further her scheme for Clarence by impressing Rose's imagination. There were other ends which the lady did not think of aloud. And, after all, it would be a pleasant thing to present to the world a girl whom everybody was dying to see.

Parties are pretty much alike in their general features; everybody has music, lights, and supper. But few have grounds so capable of being transformed into enchanted lands, with June suddenly come back in the middle of October,—roses, or the scent of roses, everywhere. The trees were full of birds, and three different bands were stationed in the grounds. Mrs. Burkhardt had regard for the many pairs of lovers who were to be of her company, and did not illuminate everywhere. There were dim, fragrant walks and groves, and mossy seats far from the house, where only stars shone, and the sound of music came faintly, in thrilling, intermittent breath. The house itself was a beacon to the country far and wide. There were people in the city who sat upon their house-roofs, and watched through spy-glasses the blazing windows of Rose Hall, three miles and more away,—saw the gay crowds pass up and down the steps, saw the

dancers, saw groups scattered in the gardens, and on verandas and balconies. Where all the flowers could have come from was a wonder even to those who knew the extent of the hot-houses at the Hall. Every greenhouse for miles around had been rifled for the occasion. Doctor Thayer had gallantly offered his finest plants, and they had been graciously accepted. When he went there, he found them in the place of honor,—not adorning the great crimson saloon in which madam received her visitors, but in the boudoir lined with rose-colored satin which Mr. Stanley had had fitted up when he made his last visit. After all, Mr. Stanley had good taste, his cousin had said, viewing this exquisite casket of a room, when it was completed.

There were thirty rooms thrown open to the guests that night, and in every room were pictures and flowers. It was like a royal reception, and Mrs. Burkhardt looked a queen. Perhaps she was powdered and rouged; but no matter for that,—she was the most superbly handsome woman in her rooms that night. She wore white satin, train and tunic embroidered and fringed with gold. A set of diamonds, which had not their equal in the country, glittered on her person. They lay among the laces on her bosom, they bound her arms and twinkled from her ears, and a small coronet that had only gold enough to hold the gems surrounded, like an aureole of sunbeams, the black, crisp waves of her hair. With her commanding height and graceful motions and attitudes, she would have riveted all eyes but for the girl who stood just beside her, a little withdrawn, and shrinking somewhat from the observation which she could not avoid.

Mrs. Burkhardt had humored Rose's wishes relative to her dress. It could scarcely be expected that "the little nun," or "Sister Blanche," as she was everywhere called, would dress as other young ladies might. Her costume was copied from an antique statue,—a trailing skirt and tunic of the pattern since revived in peplums, high in the neck, and with close sleeves reaching to the elbows. This simple and graceful costume was of white royal velvet, with a border of pale blue. Bands of turquoises bound her arms, worn over the long gloves that were buttoned with turquoises till they nearly reached the sleeves. Only the elbows were visible, snowy white, beautifully

rounded and dimpled. A scarf of blue lace bound her graceful head, bringing out the golden lights of her clustering hair, the fringed ends of the scarf forming a slight screen for her face, when she chose to so veil it by averting her head from some too admiring gaze.

It would be useless to attempt a description of the enthusiasm she excited, of her sweet and simple unconsciousness that in that crowd of beautiful women, in all the glory of elaborate and becoming costumes, she shone resplendent and unique, like the evening star amid sunset clouds. She watched with bright, wondering eyes the glittering throng that passed and repassed her, and gave a smiling greeting to the newcomers, as Mrs. Burkhardt presented them, with her grandest air, to her "cousin, Miss Rose Stanley." Doctor Thayer and Mrs. Coolidge also stood by Rose, the lady whispering observations on the people they saw, the gentleman smilingly guarding the "little nun" from a too great press of admirers. Not very far away, one might have seen a handsome young man standing persistently in the same place for an hour, and watching this group with unmoving eyes, only occasionally glancing to where Mr. Clarence Burkhardt stood smilingly receiving his mother's guests. Clarence was looking unusually well this evening, and seemed to be fully aware of it.

"Mr. Wilson," says a soft voice in the ear of this watchful gentleman, "who is that lady in garnet velvet and diamonds,—the one who is just going into the music-room?"

"I don't see her," replies Mr. Charles Wilson; and with very good reason, for he has not removed his eyes from Rose and Clarence.

Miss Lily Raymond glanced into his face, saw the direction of his eyes, and pouted her red under-lip. The young man had been detailed to show her through the rooms, and he had gone no further with her than to this post of observation, where for the last hour and more he had stood as if glued to the corner of the cabinet against which he leaned, and had not once looked at the lady on his arm. And yet, Miss Lily Raymond was well worth looking at. A pretty blonde she was, with a bright, airy manner, half-childlike, half-coquettish, and wholly charming. She had now been at Doctor Thayer's nearly two months, and

had seen Mr. Wilson every day; yet this, she thought, with vexation, was all the impression she had made.

At length Mrs. Burkhardt felt herself released from her duties, and, turning to take Doctor Thayer's offered arm, she beckoned to Clarence.

"Take Rose to see the rooms," she said.

But Rose, with pretty willfulness, shook her head at him, and put her hand in the doctor's disengaged arm. She had begun to see that she could do as she pleased.

"Very well," Mrs. Burkhardt said, smiling to hide her anger. "I will find another escort," withdrawing her hand.

Rose drew back, blushing.

"I will go with Clarence," she said.

"Was it very improper in me, Clarence, to take the doctor's arm in that way?" she whispered, in much distress.

"Certainly not! You cannot do anything very wrong," was the gallant reply; "but in a company like this, one lady is considered enough for one gentleman. Whom are you looking for?"

"Oh, it is no matter," said Rose, blushing again.

She had been looking back to where Charles Wilson stood, still looking after her, trying to hide the pallor of his face under an appearance of gayety. Her escort glanced back, and shut his teeth close together.

"Charlie and that pretty Miss Raymond are certainly very much occupied with each other," he remarked carelessly.

"It would be a good match," he went on.

"Charles is a capital fellow, and of course you can recommend your fair friend."

"What has become of the doctor and Mrs. Coolidge?" asked Rose abruptly, stopping to look back as they stepped out on the veranda.

"Mrs. Coolidge is talking with Mrs. General Summerville, about her babies, I'll be bound; and Doctor Thayer and my mamma have just disappeared in the direction of the pink boudoir. I wish I could ask you some-

thing in confidence, Cousin Rose," he said, as abruptly as she had spoken.

"So you can."

"People are talking a little about the doctor and my mother, and I can't find out anything by her. Do you know anything? Do you think they are going to be married?"

"I never dreamed of such a thing!" cried Rose, starting away from him. "It would be shameful! She is years and years older."

"I quite agree with you," said the young man. "I was afraid of it once; but I feel easier now, since mother is so much less rich. I always thought he would like the place here."

They went down into the gardens, that were scenes of enchantment. The foliage had turned with autumn tints, and in the lights seemed to be trees of red and golden flame; the very spirit of starlight, odors, love, and beauty, breathed in the strains of music that seemed to pierce the air, so penetrating was their sweetness. Lights were clustered here and there among the groves, and groups and pairs glided like shadows through the garden paths. The upper terraces were in full light from the house, and nearly as crowded as the saloons, the costumes and faces far more picturesque, since the light, coming only from one side, gave room for shade, and for many a brilliant effect on jewels, feathers, and silks.

"I don't see how anything on earth can be so beautiful!" exclaimed Rose, clasping her hands.

That night Mrs. Burkhardt took leave of her friends with great emphasis. She was about going to Europe for a time, perhaps for years; and this was probably her last meeting with them before starting. Rose was to take possession of the Hall in a week.

"It will be so large and lonesome!" said Rose pitifully, as they rode home. "Won't you change houses with me, Doctor Thayer, or come and live with me?"

RAISED FROM THE DEAD.

BY MISS CAMILLA WILLIAN.

[NO. 4.—COMPLETE IN FOUR NUMBERS.]

CHAPTER VIII.

It was rather a silent party that drove home to the Cottage that night of Mrs. Burkhardt's reception. Scarcely a word was said till the quiet good-night with which they parted. Mrs. Coolidge was tired, and went directly up-stairs, and Lily, divided between pique and a pain sharper than pique, silently followed her, but lingering a little on the way. Doctor Thayer took off his light gloves, put on an extra wrap, and stepped out to see a patient near by. The man could scarcely live through the night, and he had promised to look in a moment on his way home from the party.

"I cannot think of sleep," Rose said, hesitating on the threshold of the parlor. "I am too much excited; and, besides, the night is so fine. Are you sleepy, Charles?"

Learning over the balusters, Lily Raymond heard the question, and the young man's impassioned reply,—"I don't care ever to sleep again!"—and starting back, went into her chamber and banged the door after her.

"Why, Charles!" Rose exclaimed; "what is the matter?"

"I should be a fool were I to tell you!" he answered, almost rudely; "and you would be angry with me."

She stood in the doorway a moment longer, hesitating, the light of a single lamp that hung from the ceiling shining softly over her fair, wistful face, looking toward her companion, who had turned his back, and was leaning from the open window. The blue-hooded mantle she wore dropped downward from her shoulders, her dress lay out in rich, snowy folds on the carpet. The strictness of her training and her natural timidity inclined her to leave him; but the recollection of that time so long ago when he had taken pity on her, and been the only one in the wide world who loved her, and forgot himself in loving, prevented her going. She went slowly toward him, and af-

ter standing a moment near the window where he was, seated herself on a sofa that stood just behind him.

"I am not likely to be angry with you for telling me anything, when I ask you to tell it," she said gently. "I don't want to urge you indelicately; but it troubles me to see you unhappy, and I would gladly do anything to comfort you, if I could."

It was impossible to resist those earnest, affectionate tones. The young man turned from the window and seated himself beside her, after asking permission. She looked kindly at him, and waited to hear his explanation.

Our poor simple Rose was not on the lookout for lovers, and every new one was a surprise to her. She had not been brought up to think of such things; she was not able to distinguish between affection and a jealous, exclusive love; she had never in her life read a novel, nor heard a love-story. Now, the most she expected was to hear that Lily had in some way displeased or disappointed Charles. She was soon undeceived.

"Oh, hush! hush!" she cried, putting her hand up to stop him. "You ought not to speak so to me. You know that I am almost a nun; and if I were not, it would make no difference. And my money makes no difference either. If I wanted any one to—to think a great deal of me, and my money were in the way, I would give it all up."

She spoke hastily, almost angrily. It was an offence to her to be so approached, so spoken to. She regarded herself as one set apart, sacred from all earthly ties, only now for a season mingling in worldly gayeties. But when she saw Charles Wilson's head droop, and a deathly paleness overspread his face, her heart relented.

"I am sorry to pain you, Charles," she said, in faltering voice. "I like you very much, and I shall never forget how kind you were to me when I was a little friendless girl."

Lily Raymond, sitting at her window upstairs, heard a step in the entry below, heard the outer door open and shut, and in a moment more saw Charles Wilson stride down through the garden. Instantly she divined the trouble. Indeed, she had expected it. Looking after him, she saw that after walking to and fro in that part of the garden furthest from the house, he threw himself upon the ground, and lay there with his face hidden in his hands. She had begun by being angry.

"Good enough for him!" she had muttered, when he first went out. "He might have known that she would n't have him!" But when she saw him lying there, her anger died away. "I cannot bear it!" she said, at length. "I must go to him, if he hates me for it. Poor fellow! he can't help it if he does love her."

Looking from the side window that commanded a view of that part of the grounds, Rose had been standing with her hands clasped to her breast, watching the young man, wondering, in distress, what she ought to do, wishing Doctor Thayer would come, half of a mind to call Mrs. Coolidge. She heard Lily's step on the stairs, saw her glide past the window and down the garden path, saw Charles start to his feet at her approach. The two stood a moment, then Rose saw that while Charles hid his face in his hands and leaned against the trunk of a tree, Lily stood beside him, and after a moment touched his arm with her hand.

"Dear little Lily! she will comfort him," she said, with a sigh of relief, and went back to her sofa.

The late moon had arisen, and shone in over her, flinging its beams in a silvery mantle over that pure brow and white-robed form. Rose got up and extinguished the lamp, then sat down again and gazed thoughtfully out into the night.

"I wonder why I feel so unhappy?" she murmured. "I felt so before Charles spoke. It must be because I am doing wrong. I have n't said my prayers to night." Oh, *mea culpa!*"

Rising instantly, she knelt before her sofa in the moonlight, and, blessing herself, folded her hands, and, lifting her pale and spiritual face, went softly and solemnly through with her neglected devotions. So intent was she that she scarcely was aware of the soft opening and closing of the front door, or of the step that went through the

entry. But when she rose from her knees, she saw Doctor Thayer standing in the door of his study, his form outlined against the window behind him.

"Oh! I thought it was Charles," she said, as he came forward. "I happened to remember that I had n't said my prayers to night, and so I said them right away, lest I should get sleepy."

"Are you sleepy?" he asked.

"Oh, no! I am wide awake. I think that my first party has excited me. I shall not be able to sleep tonight, and I don't want to try."

Doctor Thayer seated himself on the sofa she had left, and presently she took a seat there also. She fancied that he had motioned her to. For a minute he sat looking thoughtfully out into the moonlight night, seeming to have quite forgotten Rose; but just as she was getting a little uneasy, and thinking that perhaps he wanted to be alone, he turned his face toward her.

"How beautiful he is!" was her involuntary thought.

And, indeed, that fine, high-bred face did look beautiful in the softening light that shone over it, and with the added charm of the faint smile that stirred his lips as he looked at her.

"I have been mentally traveling back ten years," he said, "and I have been thinking that I should like to ask you something about your experience at that time, if the subject will not be painful to you. In all the gossip and wondering that has been made over your history, you and I have never mentioned it to each other. There was no need we should. There is no need now, except to gratify a professional curiosity of mine. Would you rather not speak of that strange illness of yours?"

Rose leaned back in her corner of the sofa, and rested her head upon her hand, shading her eyes; but her forehead shone pure in the light, and the small, ringless hand looked as though carved from ivory.

"I remember so little!" she murmured, in an agitated voice; "and yet, all that I knew ten years ago, I know now. My sickness was full of terror. I can recollect that the moment I was left alone, strange little men and women, with ugly faces, used to crowd my room, and seem to threaten me. Mrs. Warren was not, certainly, very tender; but I dreaded to have her leave me at night. Doctor Marston was kind, I think.

Once he put his hand on my head, and said, 'Poor child!' But through it all was the thought that if you, or Charles, or Mrs. Coolidge, would come to me, all would be well. Of course I was delirious all the time. At last, one night, I heard the doctor say to Mrs. Warren that I was going to die. It filled me with terror, and I began to scream. In my delirium, it seemed to me that they wanted to kill me; and I tried to get out of bed, and run away. I suppose I did run across the room, and fall. I had a sensation which even now it chills me to recall. It was as though I were falling, falling, in darkness, and with a sickening horror in my heart,—falling till it seemed as though I should fall forever; and then I went out like a flame. The next I knew was a sensation of cold, and of being bound so that I could not move. I heard sounds, and longed to speak, and open my eyes; but could not. Then I thought that some one was carrying me. But it was all so dim that the effort to recall it is like trying to catch notes in the beam. Then some one else took me, and laid me on a hard bed, and I felt as though a strong light was shining over me. I could see the glow of it, though my eyes were shut. I felt quite happy, and believed that I was in heaven. Some one took my hand, and I thought that my mother had come to meet me. I lay there, and drew that light and warmth to myself, and woke slowly to a new life. It was as though I had been in some terrible place, and a friend—my mother, or some one else—had led me out of it, and now all was safe. I opened my eyes, and saw a face bending over me!"

Rose started suddenly forward from her corner of the sofa, and impulsively held out both her hands.

"O my friend! my friend!" she cried passionately, "it was you who saved my life. Do not forsake me, nor send me away from you!"

A flush swept over the doctor's face, at the suddenness of her appeal. He clasped the two trembling hands, and looked earnestly into the tearful face.

"My dear, I never dreamed of deserting you," he said; "and as for sending you from me, you will only go to your own, and I hope to see you often. Indeed, dear, I am as unwilling to spare you as you are to go. I shall be lonely here."

"Could not you go to the Hall, and live

with me, and Mrs. Coolidge, and Lily?" asked Rose, softly touching with her delicate finger-tips one of the hands that had held hers, and that still rested on the sofa between them.

As she spoke, she leaned slightly toward him, then drew back timidly, withdrawing her fingers from his hand. Kind as he was, he was so dignified and unresponsive that she half feared him.

Doctor Thayer breathed quickly, and his eyes scintillated, as he looked at her one instant in silence. This girl was too utterly ignorant. He must put a stop to such solicitations, and, cruel as it seemed, give her a lesson in respect for the world's opinion.

"I could live there only as your husband, Rose," he said, and in the effort to speak calmly his voice sounded cold. "It is not usual for gentlemen no older than I to become the guests of young ladies. The world would consider it very improper."

She looked at him one instant, with her beautiful eyes dilating with surprise, then a crimson blush rushed over her face, burning like a flame her pallid whiteness,—a blush of mingled pain and shame. For the first time, the thought came into her mind that she had been bold and indelicate, that she had offended and disgusted him, and that there was something shocking in her expressing to him her affection, and her willingness to love him. That, then, was what his coldness had meant! She sat overwhelmed with humiliation. Could it be that he would think she meant to ask him to marry her? The thought took her to her feet as though she had received a galvanic shock.

"You must pardon my childish ignorance," she stammered, half turning away, and not looking at him. And there was a ring of pride, almost of anger, in her voice. "You know I have had no chance to learn such things."

She was going away, but he detained her.

"My dear Rose," he said, with sorrowful tenderness, "do not leave me so. Do you think that I am blaming you? or that I am ungrateful for your affection? I only said this to you to save you the necessity of hearing it from somebody else."

She shrank away from him, withdrawing the hand he had taken.

"You make me think myself mean and unmanly!" he exclaimed. "Have I insulted you?"

"No," said Rose, with a drooping head;

"but you have made me think of things I never thought of before."

She glided away from him, and hurried up to her room. Doctor Thayer her husband! The thought made her faint. What had she been thinking of all summer?

"I must go away as soon as possible," she thought. "It will not do to stay here another week. I will go in town."

Miss Stanley did not go to town the next day. She went to her old home, the convent, and stayed all day and all night. The next morning she went to the Cottage, and told Mrs. Coolidge and Lily that she had concluded to remain at the convent until the Hall should be made ready for her reception.

"But you will wait and see Eugene?" Mrs. Coolidge said. "He has been out since early this morning. He will soon be in."

"I promised to return immediately," said Rose. "But you will say good-by to him for me. Stay, — I will write it."

She drew an escritoire toward her, and wrote:—

"MY DEAR FRIEND,—After so much gayety, it seems to me that I need a little quiet; and so I have concluded to stay at the convent a while. If you want anything of me, you can send, you know. Don't think me capricious in leaving you so abruptly. I only today realized that this is my last chance for some time to make a retreat. Good-by till you call on me at the Hall."

Both Mrs. Coolidge and Lily thought that they understood the meaning of this sudden move, and that it referred to Charles Wilson. Lily was not sorry for it. It gave her the opportunity she desired to comfort the young man undisturbed by the presence of the one for whom he would be every moment forgetting her. Charles had said that he could not again come to the Cottage while Rose was there; but he had pressed Lily's hand at parting, and called her his "sweet friend." Now he could come!

As her carriage turned the corner of the street, in going away, Rose saw the doctor approaching in his buggy from an opposite direction. She leaned forward, and gave him a smiling bow, thinking again,—

"He must not believe that I am angry."

He bowed but slightly in return, and there

was no smile in answer to hers. But he looked at her, with an eager, questioning look leaping into his keen eyes. Her carriage turned, and hid him from her; but in a moment after she heard his swift wheels behind them, and in another moment he was alongside, and had stopped her driver. He was looking very pale, and his expression was at once piercing and anxious.

"Where are you going?" he asked abruptly.

She told him, and added that she had written her good-by to him. She knew that he was almost hating himself for having spoken the words that had driven her from him, and she strove to act as though she had forgotten them. But he felt the difference. There was an air of constraint, in spite of her, and a touch of pride and embarrassment in her manner. She was no longer the timid yet confiding child, but the proud yet friendly lady. His words had struck more deeply than he had dreamed they would.

"You go because you are angry with me," he said quickly; "because I have insulted you!"

"I do not," she replied, tears rising to her eyes. "If you think that, then I shall turn directly back to your house; but I want very much to make a retreat."

He held out his hand to her.

"Go, then, child, if you wish to; but do not for an instant suffer an unkind thought of me to rest in your heart. I do not deserve it."

"I know that you do not," she said earnestly.

He smiled faintly, touched his hat, and, turning his horse's head, drove back home.

In a few weeks Mrs. Burkhardt and her family had left the Hall, and under Mrs. Coolidge's direction it was being prepared for its new mistress. In one thing, Rose had been willful, almost hard. The room in which her mother had died so long ago, a little room adjoining Miss Fairfield's suite, was left unchanged; but not another stick nor rag of furniture would she retain.

"It seems to me unwholesome," she said.

Moreover, she had resolved on sending away all the servants, and having new. Doctor Thayer had expressed surprise and some disapprobation at this.

"I am sorry to do or wish anything which you do not approve," Rose had said to him; "but I am quite in earnest about this. If

my mother had not died, then it would have been different."

She spoke almost in a whisper, and the eyes she lifted to him as she ceased were full of a strange terror. He said no more. He saw that she had a suspicious fear of every one in the house.

Mrs. Coolidge was nothing loth to take these arrangements on herself. She was capable, energetic, and liked to have large means at her command. Besides, she had no duties to prevent her. Her husband was absent in Europe on business, and would be gone six months longer. Their means were moderate, and it certainly was no disadvantage to her to have a beautiful home free for herself, her two children, and a servant, instead of having to pay board for them. Then she loved Rose fondly, and found the task of advising, chaperoning, and petting her a fascinating one.

By the middle of November the Hall was newly fitted up, thanks to *carte blanche* as to money, and an almost inexhaustible energy in the lady directress. A part of the furniture had previously been ordered from Paris, and was already awaiting their pleasure.

But just as the crowd of visitors began to besiege the Hall, and sue for the notice of the beautiful young mistress, Rose astonished her friends by making a new move as sudden as it was unexpected. She was going immediately to Europe, in company with Mrs. Burkhardt and her son.

For the first time, Doctor Thayer volunteered advice unasked; and for the first time Rose disregarded his advice.

"I thought that you did not entirely trust Mrs. Burkhardt," he said.

The two were sitting alone in one of the great parlors of the Hall, when Rose announced her intention to the doctor. She had, as yet, told no one else. He was looking very pale, and had paused a moment after hearing her intention before venturing to speak.

"Mrs. Burkhardt has told me all about my poor mother's death," said Rose sadly.

He looked at her in astonishment.

"How dared she?"

"I feel better for knowing it," Rose went on quietly. "I would not dare to define the strange feelings I had before she told me. She is to be pitied, for she has suffered very much in consequence; but she could not be content without telling me. I am glad that

she kept the matter quiet. It would not have brought my poor mother back, and it would have punished the apothecary very severely. In a world where so much crime goes unpunished, it is a pity that people should suffer too much for mistakes. Mrs. Burkhardt sent me away chiefly because the sight of me reminded her of that trouble; but she meant to help me afterward."

"She sent you to grow up without training or education, to become fitted only for a servant, when your mother met her death here under Mrs. Burkhardt's roof, and partly, at least, through her fault. Moreover, Mrs. Burkhardt must have known your mother."

"She says she did not," the girl replied; "and I am bound to believe her, having no proof to the contrary. But my mother must have known who she was. I don't pretend to say that Mrs. Burkhardt did no wrong: she accuses herself, indeed; but we must forgive something, and I forgive her. She is sorry. What more can I ask?"

Doctor Thayer sat, with knitted brows, wondering over the consummate art of that woman. Seeing all other ways of conciliating the girl fail, Mrs. Burkhardt had appealed to her religion. Rose could treat with gentle reserve the proud and worldly woman who sought to influence her only through her pride or her vanity, — but the heart-broken penitent her pity and affection went out to; and if a trace of distrust yet lingered, she accused herself of it as a sin, and strove to atone for it by showing a still greater kindness to her relative.

"I strongly advise you not to go," said Doctor Thayer, presently, speaking with an emphasis quite unusual with him.

"But I have promised," she said. And, gentle as her voice and manner were, and soft as were the eyes raised to his, he felt that her resolution was taken. "Aunt Barbara has lost a great deal by me. She really is not as rich as people suppose, and it is only by being with her that I can persuade her to take anything from me. I told her," Rose said, growing pale, and looking down, "that if she should marry any friend of mine, I would give her the Hall back for a wedding present."

Doctor Thayer blushed scarlet. What did the girl mean? Had Mrs. Burkhardt been playing any tricks on her credulity? or had Rose heard of such a possibility from some one else?

"What friend of yours do you expect her to marry?" he asked abruptly.

"Oh, I don't know," she replied, glancing up, and immediately blushing deeply at sight of his confusion.

"Rose," he exclaimed, half-laughing, yet angrily, "do you mean me?"

She looked down again, and was unable to reply.

The doctor started up, and walked impatiently to a window, gave the curtain a pull aside, only to let it drop again, and came back to lean on the back of his chair, looking embarrassed and distressed, yet angry.

"I suppose I must forgive you," he said; but it is very provoking, as well as very absurd. I am no longer a boy,—but it does seem a rather premature putting me among the gray-heads to assign as my choice for a wife a woman of fifty years old. I am but forty-one, and would be likely to want my wife to be a few years younger."

"I did n't make the story up," Rose said, blushing; "and I'm glad that you forgive me,"—with a faint little sparkle of mischief.

"You will not go?"

"I must go. I have made up my mind."

"You have also made up your mind to marry Clarence?" her friend asked, watching her closely.

She lifted her head a little. The momentary embarrassment was all gone, and with it the timidity, and that look of troubled sadness which he had noticed all through her conversation; and in their place was pride,—or was it something too lofty for pride, even?—and another expression that Doctor Thayer could not define, but which haunted him for many a day. It seemed a passionate reproach. She lifted her head, and gave him one look out of those brilliant eyes of hers. Only that; not a word from the closely shut lips,—neither smile nor frown on the pale, beautiful face. But that look wrung his heart, as if, unawares, he had struck one already sorrowful. Without waiting for him to speak, Rose went to the window, and called in Mrs. Coolidge and her children, who had just come upon the veranda from a walk in the gardens.

Three weeks from that day, Rose sailed for Europe, leaving Mrs. Coolidge in charge of the Hall. The doctor had not once seen her alone since the day she announced her intention to him; and when he went up to take leave of her, she had gone.

"Say good-by to him for me," Rose had said, clinging to Mrs. Coolidge. "Good-bys hurt me so that I hate to say them. Tell him not to be angry with me for disregarding his advice. I have a reason for going, and must go."

Doctor Thayer stood looking from one of the windows while this message was delivered to him, and for a moment after it was given he still stood with his back turned to the room. Then he wheeled about suddenly, and confronted his sister-in law, who was watching him intently.

"Meeta, what is the meaning of this? What has that girl gone away for?"

She hesitated one moment, then gave the answer she had resolved on giving if he should ask her that question.

"It is my belief, Eugene," she said, "that Rose loves you too well to live so near you, and have you indifferent to her."

"Then I am glad she went," said the doctor, returning to the window as abruptly as he had left it.

"Eugene," exclaimed the lady indignantly, "you are cruel and heartless! I would n't have believed!"—

She stopped, for Doctor Thayer had sunk into a chair, and dropped his face into his hands.

"Please leave me a little while, Meeta," he said, in a low tone.

That very morning, Rose lay in her berth in the ocean steamer Niagara, her face hidden in the pillow, her heart sick almost unto death.

"You had better accept your friend's invitation to travel," one whose advice she asked, and in whom alone she had confided, had told her. "It will kill or cure; most probably cure."

"I think it will kill," thought the poor girl, as she lay there counting the long paddle-strokes that pushed her further and further from all she loved.

"She shall be your wife in six months," whispered Mrs. Burkhardt exultantly to her son.

"Then, mamma, you will have to do the business," he said, rather crossly. "I don't care about being refused a second time."

CHAPTER IX.

Mrs. Burkhardt took her prize directly to Paris. Rose had desired to see her guardian, in London; but they had found an ex-

cuse for hurrying her on. Mr. Markham was off at Edinburgh, or somewhere, — he could not be reached readily, and they could as well see him on their return. They would go to Paris for a little visit. Somewhat unwillingly, Rose consented, and they staid but one day in London, — Mr. Markham all the time within half an hour's ride of them. Mrs. Burkhardt had no intention of allowing the heiress of Mr. Stanley to be known and introduced in London society. Neither did she mean that Rose should appear publicly among the novelty-loving Parisians, with her beautiful face and vast wealth to attract lovers as honey draws flies. The lady had been in Paris several times before, and was acquainted at court, where she had a cousin married to a marquis; but instead of taking rooms in a gay and fashionable locality, as she had before, Mrs. Burkhardt sought out a quiet and retired neighborhood, and lived in the most secluded manner. Rose did not know the difference, — any part of Paris would have been full of interest; and since there was a church a few steps from the door where she could go to mass every morning, and since they visited all the notable places in Paris, she was content. There were paintings and statuary and gardens and palaces to be seen, and, more delightful yet, there were the convents. Rose got admittance to every convent in Paris and its vicinity, and in every one she left her trail in gold. An ornament for the chapel, a sum of money for improvements, or for charities, — they all had for some gift, reason to remember the dark-eyed young American sylph whom each one longed to claim for their own. For her social circle, it comprised Mrs. Burkhardt and Clarence, — no one else; but the girl scarcely desired more, and they exerted themselves to supply her every wish. Clarence was not too attentive. Indeed, Rose sometimes wished that he would be a little more friendly, and allow her to forget that she had once refused his hand. She liked him as an unsophisticated girl is apt to like a man of the world, with a sort of wondering admiration of his perfect acquaintance with what is to her utterly unknown, and with a confidence and reliance as pleasant for her to feel as for him to inspire. She longed to call him Cousin Clarence, as she had once done, and drop the stiff "Mr. Burkhardt" which had some way taken its place. She wished that he would drop that way he had

of acting as though he thought she hated him, and was trying not to be in despair about it. In fine, she wished he would act less like a despairing lover, and more like a true friend. Then she could not fail to see that he was a remarkably handsome and elegant young man, and she was very sorry if he was unhappy about her. Altogether, Mr. Clarence Burkhardt was very much in his cousin's thoughts. He took care to be a good deal in her company, too. In the morning she never, or but seldom, saw him. When she had bade him good-night, and gone to her early and innocent slumber, his day had but commenced. Then, dressing hastily, he went out to pass the night in some scene of gayety and dissipation, sometimes, on returning at morning, just escaping Rose, as she stole out, missal in hand, to her early devotions. Every afternoon he was at her disposal.

But one day all this quiet life met with a change. As they sat in their saloon one afternoon, — Rose embroidering on a wonderful communion-cloth which she was going to present to her beloved sisters in Saxon, Mrs. Burkhardt leaning back in her sofa, and somewhat absently twisting the rings on her fingers, and Clarence reading aloud a letter from America, — they heard the unusual sound of carriage-wheels in their little court-yard, and five minutes after, with a great rustling of silks, a little lady tripped into the room, and, with a silvery exclamation of delight and surprise, ran to embrace Mrs. Burkhardt. The Marquise of Bellevue had only just learned of the presence of her relative in Paris, and after what she protested were superhuman efforts had discovered her retreat.

"I thought I would have to employ the police," she said, laughing; "but, at all risks, I was quite determined to find you out."

After another embrace, she turned to greet Clarence, and he made acquainted with Rose, welcoming both to Paris with every appearance of cordiality and delight. And all the while she was thinking, —

"My black-eyed Cousin Barbara and her precious son are hiding this young beauty from me. I will find out what it means. She must be a prize, or they would n't take so much pains."

And at the same time, while replying to her visitor's compliments with what sweetness she could command at the moment,

Mrs. Burkhardt was mentally complimenting her somewhat as follows:—

Je Pestel she will spoil everything. She knows that at this moment I could tear her eyes out. — and yet how sweet and smiling she is! How she looks at Rose, and pats her arm with that baby hand of hers! She is determined to get the girl."

Madame la Marquise was determined first to find out who the girl was. Miss Stanley! what, of England? Oh, of America. Madame did not know that there were any left of the family there, — and yet Rose called Mrs. Burkhardt aunt.

Rose explained in a few words.

"My name was Paulier; but when Mr. Walter Stanley died he made me his heiress, and wished me to take his name."

"Oh!"

Madame understood at once. She knew all that story. What a romance! So Mr. Stanley had found the daughter of his old love, and just caught her from under the man's veil. Rose must remember that she, the marquise, was also a sort of cousin. And she must let Paris see her; and, above all, she must be presented to the dear empress. Her majesty liked romance, and was the sweetest creature living, — a perfect angel. The marquise would mention Rose to her that very day.

Mrs. Burkhardt tried to say something about Rose having an objection to gay society, and their intention to return to London right away; but Rose quietly interposed.

"I would like to see the empress," she said. "I have always wished to. And there is no hurry about going to London, is there?"

The marquise glanced triumphantly at her cousin, and Mrs. Burkhardt dropped her eyes to hide the anger in them.

Rose was pre-ented to the empress, and immediately fell in love with her; Eugenie also taking an immediate fancy to the young stranger, and petting her remarkably.

"Cannot we persuade this white rose of yours to marry in Paris, and stay with us?" her majesty asked the marquise. "Is she to marry her cousin? You think not. Then, madame, do not let her go."

It was certainly time, Mrs. Burkhardt perceived, for vigorous measures. For several days Rose had noticed that her aunt, as she called her, was troubled and pre-occupied, and that Clarence scarcely appeared in

the saloon. She felt uneasy, but did not like to ask an explanation. Perhaps they did not wish to remain any longer in Paris, and were disinclined to interrupt her pleasures by telling her so. At length she spoke to her aunt about it.

"If you wish to go to London, aunt, I will go any time; and we could return here."

"I do not think it is best that we should go to London," Mrs. Burkhardt said, in a constrained voice, looking down, and tapping her foot on the carpet as she spoke.

"I thought you wished it," Rose said in surprise.

"I did; but circumstances have changed," was the cold answer.

"Why, what has happened? What is the matter? Is any one ill or dead?" exclaimed Rose, in affright.

Mrs. Burkhardt raised her eyes, and looked coldly and searchingly at the girl, and even while looking, her face softened, and she held out her hand.

"My dear, I know it is all false. Your look is too pure, too frank for guilt."

"Guilt!" repeated Rose, growing pale; "what guilt? what do you mean?"

The lady seemed to consider a moment, then she drew Rose to a seat beside her on the sofa.

"I will tell you the whole," she said, with an air of frank kindness; "for you ought to know. But, my dear, rely on my friendship, and on that of Clarence, and do not fear that we will turn against you, or believe any slanders that may be circulated against you. Indeed, poor Clarence is almost crazy about it, and so angry that I am in mortal terror lest he should fight some one."

"Tell me! tell me!" Rose broke out.

"It is said, my dear, that you are a favorite of the emperor, and that the Marquise of Bellevue is a go-between, that you must meet him at her house, and that the empress only receives you because she is afraid of her husband. All Paris believes it, and the story has gone both to England and America. That is my reason for being afraid to go to London. It is doubtful if you would be admitted into society there."

She paused a moment to mark the effect of her tale. Rose sat motionless, as if turned to stone, and stared at her.

"You can see now why I was not very willing to have you enter society with the

marquise," she resumed. "Marie is a giddy creature, and scarcely a safe chaperon for an inexperienced girl."

"No one can believe such a slander!" cried Rose wildly. "It is too horrible! It is too false! It is so easy to prove it false."

"My poor child," Mrs. Burkhardt said with a sigh, "it is impossible to recall or silence a slander that is once circulated. I have done everything I could, but in vain."

Rose started up with a cry.

"What shall I do? What shall I do?" walking to and fro, and wringing her hands. "It is worse than death."

Mrs. Burkhardt went to her, put an arm about her, and kissed the pallid cheek.

"My love," she said, "there is one way, and I hesitated to mention it, lest you might think it hard. If you were married, it would silence all this. Of course, if a gentleman of high standing were to marry you now, it would be a proof that the story was utterly false, since he would have opportunities for knowing the truth."

"Who would marry a girl of whom such things could for an instant be believed?" cried Rose, moaning between every breath.

"No one who believed them," said the lady, in a whispered voice. "But one who loved and trusted you might be willing to show the world that he knew you to be innocent."

"No one loves me," moaned the girl, sinking into a chair, and hiding her face in her hands.

For a moment there was silence, then as she sat there with her face hidden, some one knelt beside her, and an arm gently encircled her waist.

"No, no one loves me," Rose repeated. "I have never found one who would forget himself for me, or stand by me through good and ill. My best friends are those dear sisters in Saxon, and perhaps they would not receive me now."

"There is one who loves you through good and ill!" said a low voice at her side.

Rose started, and lifted her face. Mrs. Burkhardt had disappeared, and Clarence was kneeling by her with his flushed face and tearful eyes raised toward her.

"My poor darling!" he said tenderly, "come to me for protection. Be my wife, and no one in the world will dare to breathe a word against you."

She half-withdrew from him, and yet his love was soothing to her then.

"Let mine be the hand to wipe those tears away, my poor Rose!" he said, touching her cheek with his delicate hand. "Let my name be the one to shelter you, my love the love to console you. Speak but the word, Rose, and you are safe and I happy."

"Oh, what shall I do?" murmured the girl, looking away from him.

"Am I so hateful to you that you would rather be ruined than come to me?" he asked reproachfully.

Rose turned toward him again, and softly laid her hand in his, but withdrew it instantly when he would have clasped it.

"You are very kind, dear Clarence," she said, tremulously; "but I do not know what to say now, except that I thank you. Please let me go."

She rose from her seat, putting him gently away from her; then, as if fearing that she had been unkind and ungrateful, she held out her hand, and lifted her pale face.

"O Clarence!" she said, "if I seem ungrateful to you ever, forgive me! God will reward you if I do not. Pardon me now if I seem abrupt. You cannot know what I suffer. My head is in a whirl, my heart is bursting. I am rich, Clarence, but I find that riches bring neither protection nor happiness. I had no such misery when I was a poor little pauper girl, nor when I was at the convent. I felt safe then; but now, even though you offer me protection, I do not feel safe. It must be because I am an orphan, and ignorant of the ways of the world. Don't say any more now. I want to be alone."

He drew back from her clear, pure eyes, and a faint blush deepened in his face as she spoke to him. Perhaps some momentary shame touched his heart for the base falsehood he was wringing that girl's heart with.

"I will tell you tomorrow," she said; and, turning away, left the room.

It was already evening, and Rose did not appear again that night. After an hour or two Mrs. Burkhardt went to her. She found Rose on her knees with her face bowed forward to the *prie-dieu*. The lady waited a moment, but as Rose did not stir, she went to her, and stooping, put an arm about her figure.

"My dear, can I do anything for you?" she asked tenderly.

"No, I thank you," answered Rose, in a suppressed voice, without raising her face.

"Won't you come out and sit with us a while? Clarence is very unhappy about you."

"I must be alone tonight," said Rose. "Thank Clarence for being so kind."

"What shall I tell him, dear?" urged Mrs. Burkhardt. "Shall I say that you will give him the best thanks that he could receive, by consenting to become his wife without delay? It is your only course, my dear; and that once done, all will be right."

The girl's breath was coming in gasps.

"I can say nothing tonight. I will tell him in the morning," she said.

And, fearing to urge her too much, Mrs. Burkhardt was obliged to content herself with that.

"Good-night then, dear," she said, kissing her affectionately.

The next morning they heard Rose go out as usual to the church, and waited impatiently for her to come in. But hours passed, and there was no sign of her. They began to grow uneasy, and at length Clarence went to the church in search of her. The door stood open, but there was no sign of the girl within. He went to the sacristies, to the chapels, and examined the confessionals. Rose was nowhere to be seen.

He hurried home to his mother.

What was to be done? They were in terror. That Rose should go to any one for advice, or repeat to any one the tale which they had imposed on her, had not entered their minds. They had thought that grief and shame would keep her silent, and that fear would induce her to put herself into their hands.

While they hesitated which way to go, a servant handed them a note which had just been sent.

Mrs. Burkhardt tore it open eagerly. It was from Rose, and read thus:—

"I cannot stay in the world which I know so little, and which punishes my ignorance with such cruel severity. Do not be anxious about me: I am safe. And do not seek me; for I shall not return. I thank you and Clarence for any good you may have intended me, and I forgive you for any harm you may have done. Do not write to any one about me. I shall myself write to my guardian and Mrs. Coolidge."

"Who would have thought there was such spirit in the girl?" exclaimed Mrs. Burkhardt, crushing the note in her hand.

CHAPTER X.

It was Thursday of Holy Week, and the nuns of the convent of Notre Dame in Sax-on were in their chapel, all kneeling motionless, like so many images carved of ebony, every face, pale and wasted by the fast of Lent, turned toward the Repository, which shone with flowers and candles. All the rest of the chapel was dim, the pictures and crucifixes veiled, the altar deserted. Every one of the nuns was in the chapel; and, when the hall door-bell rang, the portress had to rise and go out to answer the summons. After a while she returned to her place again. Just behind her came another figure,—a lady dressed all in black, with a veil over her face. Gliding silently into the chapel, she knelt near the door, and, bowing forward, hid her face in her hands. Her whole form trembled, and she seemed to be praying and weeping at once. For nearly half an hour there was silence. Then one of the nuns went out. As she passed by, the stranger glanced up through her veil, and, seeing who she was, rose and followed her.

The superior had not noticed the newcomer, and supposed that the step behind her was that of one of the sisters. But, as she reached the door of the assembly-room, she heard a soft and tremulous voice.

"Mother!"

At that sound, she turned. But one in the world called her mother, and that one had been permitted to give the unusual title partly through fondness, partly because she was an orphan. A slight hand put back the thick black veil, and Rose Blanche Stanley's pale and tear-wet face was before her, and in another moment she was hidden in her bosom.

"My dear child! where have you come from?" was all that the superior could say.

"I have come to you from a wicked world, mother," sobbed the girl. "Keep me here. There seems to be no help or safety anywhere else."

"Come to my room," the nun said, drawing her gently away. "There we shall be undisturbed, and you can tell me all your story."

She led the girl to the little room which

was her own, as superior, and there gently removed her bonnet and shawl. The fair face had lost its smooth curves, and was white and thin. Blue shadows lay under the eyes, and the eyes themselves were heavy with weeping.

"Has Mrs. Burkhardt returned so soon?" the superior asked, after having placed Rose on a narrow pallet, and piled the pillows under her head. For the girl seemed unable to sit up.

"No, mother," Rose answered; "I came without her. Come close, and let me hold your hand while I tell. I left Mrs. Burkhardt in Paris. She did n't know where I went, but I went to the Sisters of Notre Dame, in M. Street. After a few weeks I started for home in company with some of them who were coming to America. They went to Baltimore, and I came here. O mother! I can scarcely tell you why I left Mrs. Burkhardt. I did not dream that people could be so wicked. She told me a horrible story,—made me believe that I was talked about terribly in Paris, and that the same scandals were repeated here and in London, so that it was doubtful if good people would speak to me. It was all false, mother, and it was all to get me to marry Clarence. I was wild, of course. I thought that I was ruined, and I did not know what was to become of me. I did not know that you even would receive me. The morning after they told me I went to mass, and after mass was over I went to Father St. Hilaire, and told him the whole. It was he who first assured me that there was no such scandal, that it was a plot to make me marry Clarence. He told me not to go back to them,—that people who could do such a wicked thing would not stop there. So I went directly to the convent, and came home as I told you."

"My poor lamb!" said the nun compassionately. "It was hard, but, thank God, you found friends and a safe refuge! How much happier you are than many who can never prove their innocence. And yet, not happier; for blessed are those who are slandered, even as he was slandered. In this season, when we commemorate his sufferings, thank him that you also have your cross to unite with his. You are welcome, my dear, to your old home. Have you been to the Hall?"

"No," Rose sighed. "I wanted to come to you first."

The superior smiled, and bent to kiss the pale cheek of the speaker.

"You do not forget us, dear," she said. "Neither have we forgotten you. Every day we remember you in our prayers, and at mass you are named among our benefactors."

"It is so sweet to hear the dear old pious talk again!" Rose said, smiling faintly through her tears. "I have got to feel as though trouble was a terrible thing, which must be run away from."

"You are fasting?" the superior asked.

"Why, yes, surely, mother!" surprised that such a question should be asked her in Holy Week.

The mother smiled.

"But I shall not allow it," she said; "you are too weak. Do you remember you came to me fasting when first you came, and I persuaded you to eat? Now I am going to command it. You came to me then, also, in tears."

Rose took in hers the hand that had been caressing her hair, and pressed it to her lips.

"You were ever my consoler!" she said fervently.

And in speaking a brighter color bloomed into her cheeks.

Easter Sunday was near the first of April, and the weather was unusually warm. All the gardens of Saxon were full of green and bloom, and the grounds of the Hall were superb. Rose had remained closely at the convent until after Easter, and had not announced her return, having a fancy to give Mrs. Coolidge a surprise. But on the evening of Easter Monday she sent for a close carriage, and was driven to the entrance-gate of her domain.

"Wait for me at the next street," she said to the driver; "and don't go away, though I should not return for two or three hours."

It was about sunset, and she walked slowly up the avenue. Some new life began to stir in her. She recollected that she was at home, on her own ground, and that every one there was a friend or dependent. Surely she had nothing else to fear. And yet they were happy enough without her, they had not needed her. While she had been weeping and moaning in a foreign land, her trees had budded and blossomed, daisies and dandelions and violets had laughed out all over her land, and the birds had come merrily to build their nests.

"Perhaps Mrs. Coolidge would rather have me stay away," she sighed. Then she checked herself. "How distrustful I am growing!"

A flutter of a muslin dress at a turn of the avenue caught her eye. She drew hastily aside, and stepped into a shady little nook behind a vine-covered screen. At the same time she heard a step coming up the avenue, and, looking from her concealment, she saw a form the sight of which made the blood rush into her face,—so flashing the eyes that looked up the avenue, she thought for a moment that he saw her, and that he had heard and believed that vile story. It seemed as though, knowing of her arrival, he had come to take away his sister-in-law from the place contaminated by such a presence. But she was soon undeceived as to his having seen her. His look was for the lady coming down the avenue to meet him.

"Have you any news, Eugene?" called out Mrs. Coolidge, before she reached the doctor.

"News enough!" he answered, in a voice of such concentrated passion that Rose glanced at him again, to make sure that it was he who spoke.

Mrs. Coolidge paused, and looked at him in silent anxiety. There was a little rustic seat directly in front of the screen behind which Rose stood, and there the doctor threw himself down, breathing heavily, like one who is exhausted, or whose heart beats so strongly that he pants with its motion.

Trembling with agitation, Rose could not have torn herself away, even had it been possible to do so without revealing herself. She leaned closely to the trellis and watched the two.

"Dear me! What is it, Eugene?" asked Mrs. Coolidge, impatiently, after waiting a moment.

Doctor Thayer looked at her as if his anger were for her.

"Meeta," he said, through his teeth, "those people are fit for nothing but the State's Prison. See what a letter I have received from Mrs. Burkhardt," thrusting a letter into her hand. "That accounts for the poor child's sudden change of plans. You will see that she is coming home, is now on her way, has, perhaps, even now arrived."

As he spoke, his eyes glanced swiftly down the avenue, as if he expected to see some one coming up.

"A mere silly tale which she only mentioned to Rose!" he went on, unable to keep silent, quoting scornfully from the letter. "As if Rose would be so overcome by a mere silly tale as to leave Mrs. Burkhardt in that sudden manner! And what right had she to mention such a tale to Rose, even if one were in circulation, which I do not believe? She betrays herself! It is a plot which she is trying to smooth over."

"Shameful!" murmured Mrs. Coolidge, as she read the letter, an angry and confused blush mantling her fair face. "It is shameful for that child to have been so tried!"

"You see what she says about the priests," Doctor Thayer said, with a loathing glance at the letter in his sister's hand. "She pretends to think that they tried to persuade Rose to leave her, in order that they might get her money. I have no patience with that woman!" he cried, starting up.

"She will be here soon, the dear child!" said Mrs. Coolidge, warmly. "The letter says that Mrs. Burkhardt has ascertained that Rose and these sisters are in London on their way to America. I am so rejoiced that she is coming. I hope that now she will stay; and I hope, also, that you will not let her go away again, Eugene," casting a significant glance at her companion.

He turned away from her, frowning, and, reaching, tore down a long branch of the vine directly before Rose. At the same instant the blood rushed crimson into his face.

"Do not speak in that way to me, Meeta!" he said. "Rose's fortune is an insurmountable barrier. But for that"—

He stopped.

"She may be here this very night," said the lady joyfully. "I must go and prepare. Will you come?"

He waved her away, and began to walk to and fro before the vine-screen, pausing thoughtfully now and then, but starting abruptly on his walk again. After one of these pauses, as he turned, he saw a slight, black-robed figure standing before him, at the corner of the screen of vines. He stood still an instant, then started forward with both his arms extended. Rose stood there, alternately blushing and pale, looking at him with luminous eyes. There was not one word said, but he clasped her in a rapturous embrace.

"Are you really glad to see me?" she asked, presently, drawing back a little, and looking shyly in his face.

"Glad!" he repeated, unable to take his eyes from her. And she need only to look in his face to see the gladness that words would not express.

"Come and let me tell you how glad I am," he said, drawing her to the seat beside him.

She sat there leaning against him in that moment of silence.

"It is so sweet not to be afraid of you!" she whispered, impulsively turning her lips toward his shoulder.

He trembled with delight, but pretended to take no notice of the caress.

"Rose," he said, "from the moment when, years ago, you lifted your eyelids which I thought were sealed forever, and looked at me with those sweet and piercing eyes which I never can forget, from that moment I loved you. You were but a child; but it wrung my heart to give you up. Do you remember that I was as fond of you then as you were of me?"

"Yes, dear!" she said softly.

"It seemed as though I forgot you," he went on, drawing her cheek close to his breast; "but I did not. I did not know how I loved you till you appeared before me, a woman. Then I knew that all the adoring fondness and passion that my heart was capable of, you had awakened."

"Why did you not tell me?" she exclaimed, raising her face to look reproachfully at him. "It would have saved me so much! I have suffered since then, Doctor Thayer; but I should not if you had told me this."

"I was prevented partly by pride," he said, smiling at her reproach, and drawing her to him again, as if he would shield her from all future suffering. "I could not bear that people should think that I took advantage of your youth and inexperience to get possession of your wealth."

"You would have sacrificed me to a whim!" she exclaimed.

"But I was not sure that you cared for me other than as a friend," he said. "I was not sure but you might prefer some one else, possibly Charles."

She lifted her face again, and looked smilingly into his.

"What awful fibs you do tell!" she said.

The sun went down, and the twilight deepened into night, and the stars came out

while those two sat there. The driver waiting at the corner of the next street had a lonely time of it; but the hours flew for those who had been so strangely brought together and associated in the first place, so strangely kept for each other, and who now seemed for the first time to have really met. It was nearly nine o'clock when Doctor Thayer led Rose down to her carriage, and, seating himself beside her, was driven to the convent gate. It was late, and the gate was closed; but Rose had stipulated for admission at whatever hour she might return, and a black-robed figure, with a huge watchdog walking beside her, came gliding down the avenue in answer to her summons.

The next morning a carriage was driven up to the Hall, and Mrs. Coolidge ran out joyfully to welcome the young mistress of the domain, a troop of servants forming hastily in her wake. If the lady had expected to see a pale and drooping girl, she was disappointed. Rose had been in Parisian society long enough to have acquired some of its style, and nature had gifted her richly. Besides, she was radiant with happiness. The servants might well gaze with admiring pride on the beautiful, bright-faced lady who stepped with such airy grace from her carriage, and came smiling up to the door, entering as a young queen might enter her palace. Mrs. Coolidge felt a little disconcerted by the elegance of this lady whom she had called "child," till, when they were alone, Rose ran to her again, and clasping her about the neck, wept joyfully upon her shoulder.

"My dear!" said the lady, gratified, yet surprised.

"Oh! you thought me a little too dignified," said Rose, half laughing. "But I was afraid that, if I yielded at all, I should make a scene. And I recollected what I heard an English lady say, — 'Never unbend before your servants. It is better to be too stately than too free with them.' You see, dear sister Meeta, I am growing fearfully worldly; just now when I should be more than ever desirous to be good, more than ever thankful to God for all the sunshine he has poured over my path. Do you know I am so happy that I don't know what to do?"

Mrs. Coolidge looked with eager, half-anxious questioning into the speaker's face.

"My dear, don't keep me in suspense!" she said.

But Rose no longer saw her. Her eyes were looking through the window, and down the avenue, fixed on a figure that came leisurely up toward the house; and she certainly was not a white rose then, for her cheeks were glowing red.

"Have you seen him?" asked Mrs. Coolidge eagerly.

"Yes," answered Rose, intent on watching the advancing figure, and only smilingly submitting to her friend's joyful embrace.

Doctor Thayer did not seem in the least haste. He walked very moderately, and even stopped a moment on the terrace outside to admire the view. But Rose was not hurt nor impatient. She knew well the feeling which, sure of a pleasure, postpones its enjoyment, thereby multiplying it, or escaping the oppression of a too great and sudden happiness. She was willing that he should stand there an hour, if he liked, for she would see him, and he would be near her.

"Has Miss Stanley arrived?" she heard him ask a servant.

A moment after he came in. The proud, fond look in his eyes would have repaid her a thousand-fold had she been disposed to consider herself slighted.

"By the way," he said, after a while, "I forgot that I am old enough to be your father. Did you know that I am twice your age? I have gray hairs."

She glanced gravely at his curling locks, in which, sure enough, there were faintly visible threads of silver.

"They show that you have had trouble and hard work," she said, with tender earnestness. "I hope that I shall never make your hair turn white any faster. But I wish you would not work quite so hard."

He only smiled, waiting for her to speak again. Her artless, earnest tenderness captivated his fancy, while it touched him to the heart.

"I have been thinking," she said, "that if you still have any pride about the matter,

and don't like me to be richer than you, I could give my money all away, and we could live at the Cottage. I want to give the sisters something; and there is Meeta, and many others. What do you say to it?"

"Would you give up all, and make yourself poor for my sake?" he asked, with emotion.

"Certainly I would!" she replied, seemingly surprised that he should think the question necessary.

"I will then lay down all my pride rather than lose you," he said fervently. "Nothing shall ever again separate us. You are mine, raised from the grave itself for me, and I claim to hold you. I blush that I should ever have thought of money in connection with you, my darling. If I dare to take one so rich in youth and beauty, in goodness and in love, I may well forget the meaner riches of houses and lands."

"I forgot to ask about Charles," said Rose presently.

"Charles? Oh, he and Lily are soon to be married."

Doctor Thayer and Rose were married in September. There was no show or parade at their wedding, and they started immediately on a short visit to England. In two months they returned, and took possession of the Hall. There is nowhere a happier couple, or one more respected and beloved. Indeed, Mrs. Thayer is the idol, not only of the poor and the sorrowful, whom she relieves and comforts, but of the larger social circle of which she is so brilliant an ornament. This beautiful young matron proves what has often been doubted, — that a woman may have an ardent piety in her heart, and yet be a fascinating and elegant member of society; and that there is no necessary connection between a long face and nasal voice and the love of God. It is only vice and meanness that find her forbidding, and even the mean and the vicious blush for themselves in her presence, and are better for that unwonted feeling of shame.

RAISED FROM THE DEAD.

BY MISS CAMILLA WILLIAN.

[NO. 1. — COMPLETE IN FOUR NUMBERS.]

CHAPTER I.

A bird's-eye view of the town of Saxon, near, as a pigeon might take it, say, on or about the 15th of May, must be a lovely sight. Eastward the teeming city of O., east of that the sea; and within sight of the blue salt waves, within sound of the city bells, when they rang together, the fair town spread over hill and dale, no crowded streets, no dingy hovels elbowing each other, no shabby splendor of stucco shops, but mansions and cottages embosomed in gardens, orchards and lawns of velvet verdure. Saxon was a town of suburban residences, inhabited chiefly by ladies and gentlemen who all know each other. At this season of mid-May, the houses were in the midst of vast bouquets, all the cherry-trees white with bloom, all the peach and apple trees blushing rose-red with yet unopened buds. The green is fresh, and has not yet lost its early gold; and as from our bird's-eye view we settle down to the garden of a little hill-side cottage, we find the beds on fire with the many-colored flames of tulips, orange, blood-red and pink, and crowded tiny campaniles of hyacinths shaking perfume from their spikes of bells.

This little cottage is one of the prettiest places in Saxon, and proves how beautiful an effect may be produced by a little money used with a great deal of taste. It would be hard to believe at first sight that the place is supported and kept in order solely by Miss Meeta Wilson's salary of six hundred dollars a year, and her sister Anne's fifteen dollars a week; yet such is the fact. Miss Meeta teaches in a school in town, and Miss Anne is an assistant librarian, also in town. These two, with their mother, and a brother fourteen years of age, make up the family. The Rev. Mr. John Wilson, a Congregational minister on a small scale, died years ago, and would have left his

family beggars, did, indeed, leave them so; but sundry pious friends and sympathizing clergymen, animated by that edifying *esprit de corps* which characterizes the guild, contributed and bought this cottage for the widow and her young children. Mrs. Wilson was not overburdened with independent feeling, and had, moreover, been brought up with the conviction that ministers' families ought to be taken care of; so she accepted the bounty of her friends with gratitude, to be sure, but without the qualms of pride, and for several years received tranquilly the various baskets of provisions, sums of money and odd helps which were necessary to her support. Her daughters were of other mettle, and after choking, and blushing, and crying a few years over their condition, obtained employment, as we have seen, and politely, but decidedly, declined all further assistance. They even had visions of repaying the money given for their house, and had already sent a hundred to the fund for poor clergymen, not being able to more nearly identify their creditor.

I said that Miss Anne Wilson was an assistant librarian; I should have said that she had been so; for on this sweet May-day she was about taking other responsibilities on herself, her brother Charles having been educated to assume her duties.

There was an unwonted stir at the cottage, and pretty rooms had been put in order and adorned with flowers and green at an unusually early hour in the morning. Mrs. Wilson, in immaculate petticoats and stockings, with her hair satin smooth and adorned with a thread-lace cap, and with an expression half-anxious, half-delighted, went from room to room, up-stairs, down-stairs, from parlor to kitchen and from kitchen to parlor, holding her print wrapper about, and answering mildly, "Yes, my dear, presently!" to her daughter Meeta's impatient and oft-repeated, "Mamma, will

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you please to put on your dress now? Some one might come, and there is nothing in the world for you to do."

Mrs. Wilson's silver-gray silk dress, now lying spread carefully out on her bed upstairs, is quite too fine a garment, in her estimation, to be whisked through the kitchen and pantry, or trailed unnecessarily over the stairs. Having donned that, and fastened her lace collar with the little pearl pin which was one of her wedding presents, she wishes to have nothing more to do than to step into the next chamber, from which Meeta has called to her, and whence comes occasionally a soft hum of girlish voices, then make a dignified descent to the parlor and hold herself in readiness to receive her company.

Leaving her at length to complete her toilet, we approach the door of her daughter's chamber. There is momentary silence, then a soft voice asks, "How would cherry-blossoms do?"

Another moment of silence, then another voice replies, doubtfully, —

"We might try."

The picture we see, as we stand upon the threshold of this chamber, is a pretty one, and explains itself. Four young ladies, chief among them Miss Meeta Wilson, surround a girl who stands before a dressing-glass, not looking at herself, far too pre-occupied and agitated for that, but standing there because she was told to, and because, however she may on ordinary occasions be capable of thinking for herself, on this morning she is only an automaton in the hands of her four gentle tyrants. A very charming automaton Miss Anne Wilson is on this occasion, as a fresh and lovely girl in her bridal dress is sure to be. The snow-white of her *fleecy*, *flowing* muslin dress and tulle veil bring out the delicate pink of her complexion, and the closely covered arms and shoulders, while they testify to an exquisite and exceptional modesty, do not entirely hide how graceful her shape is. Anne Wilson is neither a beauty nor a genius, but she is an amiable and a pretty girl, and a fortunate one, moreover; for she has captivated one of the most desirable young men in the town of Saxon. Indeed, Doctor Eugene Thayer could have chosen a wife from any of the old city families. To be sure, he was not rich; but then his connections were of the best, his education was excellent, his talents far above common,

and his person agreeable. He belonged to a medical family of high repute, his father, grandfather and an uncle all having been doctors, and eminent in their profession, and though but a few years in practice, he already had nearly monopolized the business in the town of Saxon. If a few still clung to old Doctor Marston, and preferred experience to talent, the majority had perfect faith in the sharp-eyed young physician, who loved his profession to enthusiasm, and who had also the benefit of his ancestors. Doctor Thayer was sure to be rich some day, and to have a name which would vie with the names of his father and grandfather, who were everywhere quoted as authorities both in pharmacy and surgery.

There had been a good deal of debating by the doctor and his lady's family over this wedding. Both had a large circle of acquaintances, and both had limited means. Both, moreover, had common sense and good taste. It would certainly be very pleasant for the young people if all their friends could witness their marriage, and offer congratulations on the event; but in that case they must be married in church, and receive their visitors — well, where should they receive them?

"They would have to come in in single file at the front-door, make a bow, pocket a slice of cake, and march out the back-door," laughed Meeta. "Our parlor will hold just twenty people. Beside, we can't afford cake and wine for so many."

The end of the matter was that a quiet little wedding at the cottage, with a few of the nearest friends, and after that a week's journey, was decided on. But, simple as this arrangement was, it was decided to have it as perfect as possible of its kind. The cake was marvellous, and cut with the most beautiful knives that could be found among the pile of silver presented to the bride; the wine was selected by a connoisseur, and was to be drank from engraven glasses which Miss Meeta had nearly ruined herself to buy. Meeta could afford to be extravagant, for, with the same family income as before, they were to board Dr. and Mrs. Thayer, which would add materially to their funds. The bride wore plain muslin and a tulle veil, but persons learned in such matters might perceive that both these were of wonderful fineness; and the young friends who were admitted to assist

at the mysteries of the toilet were in raptures over Anne's satin corsets, silk stockings, and embroidered linen. Only one thing had failed, and that was orange-blossoms. Not one was to be had, for love or money. This mishap brings us back to the question, "How would cherry-blossoms do?" and the bride's absent admission, "We might try."

Miss Meeta put her hand out the chamber-window, and scanned closely the great pyramids of snow-bloom that stood steeping themselves in the warm sunshine, and indolently yielding a drop of honey here and there to the bees that only seemed to make the silence greater with their buzzing. She stretched her arm out and tried to reach a branch, thereby scaring away two golden robins that sat motionless on a twig, and seemed looking in at the chamber-window; but the branch was too far away.

"If I could see some one," murmured the bride's sister, glancing up and down the road; and immediately—having her wish—beckoned to a little girl who was sauntering up and down the hill. The child had been looking at the house, and, seeing the lady beckon, hesitatingly approached the gate.

"Rose Paulier," the lady called out, in a pleasant but peremptory way, "come in here!"

The child opened the gate and entered the yard, her lustrous eyes of dark hazel steadily fixed on the lady as she went timidly up the smooth gravel-walk, and no sign of a smile stirring her pale and wistful little face.

"Now, Rose," Miss Wilson said, when the child had come within easy hearing, "you do something for me, and I will give you a slice of wedding-cake. You go up the steps into that big cherry-tree, and pick this basket full of blossoms and buds,—and be quick about it."

The little girl, who did not seem to be more than nine years old, caught the basket the lady threw her, and, crossing the yard to an enormous cherry-tree in which an arbor had been built, went up the steps, and gathered bunches of buds and flowers, choosing the fairest. As she descended from the tree, she saw that Miss Meeta was leaning out of the window and watching for her.

"Come right up here with them," the lady said.

The child obediently, but with the same air of mingled dreaminess and timidity, went softly in at the open front-door, crossed the entry, and stole up the stairs, appearing presently at the door of the young ladies' chamber.

"That's a good girl!" said Miss Wilson approvingly, taking the basket of flowers. "Now you may stay and see the bride dressed."

The bride, who had a smile for everybody, had one also for the little bare-footed, coarsely clad girl who had brought her bridal garland, and who stood just within the threshold, gazing with admiring awe at the lovely, white-robed figure before her.

"I do believe," said Miss Meeta, in a detached manner, as she fastened bunch after bunch of the delicate flowers in her sister's veil, "I do believe that these are going to look lovely. The buds are as pretty as orange-buds. Let me just put a cluster in this braid. There—no, a few more. Why, I declare! who would have thought?" And she stood back to mark the effect.

There was an admiring chorus. The cherry-blossoms proved to be an exquisitely beautiful substitute for the bridal orange-flowers.

"Bless me!" cried Miss Meeta, glancing from the window at the sound of a quick step on the gravel-walk. "Here's the doctor. You're all ready, Nan. I must run and get my dress on."

As she disappeared through one door, Doctor Thayer appeared at the other, and stood there a moment, silent and smiling, looking at his bride, who blushing allowed his inspection. Doctor Thayer could not have been much over thirty, and perhaps was scarcely that age. He was slight, but gave promise of developing into a noble figure, if that nervous temperament which showed in his prompt and direct motions, and in the quick glance of his brilliant eyes, did not keep the flesh off. His features were noticeably fine, though rather thin; his hair dark, and close-cut to a well-shaped head; a long mustache, drooping over but not concealing a remarkably handsome mouth and chin. The expression of his face was bright, frank, and cordial; but will and pride lurked in the rather prominent and pronounced brows. The eyes, which were deep-set, brilliant, and penetrating, would easily have been mistaken for black, but were in reality of a clear, pale gray.

Without saying a word, he advanced into the room, took his bride by the hand, and kissed her glowing cheek, then nodded smilingly to her friends. Lastly, he perceived the child, who had shrunk back on his entrance, and now stood earnestly yet fearfully regarding him.

"Well, is Rose Paulier going to be bride-maid?" asked the doctor, in a clear, pleasant voice, smiling on the child, not so much from fondness for her as from contentment with himself.

"No, sir," whispered Rose presently, since no one else answered, her cheeks glowing scarlet with confusion at seeing so many eyes upon her.

"You would rather be a bride, perhaps?" asked the doctor, with great politeness.

Rose hesitated, not knowing what manner of answer she was expected to make, then dropped her lustrous eyes, and said again, —

"Yes, sir."

The eyes were lifted, though instantly, at the laugh that broke forth at her answer, roused of anger, surprise, and wounded feeling rushed into them, and enhanced their dazzling brightness.

"What are you doing to this child?" cried Miss Meeta, appearing in the door, arrayed in white like her sister, but wearing a scarf of blue gauze instead of the white veil. "I won't have her plagued."

"She wishes to be married, Meeta," explained the doctor.

"Dear little innocent!" cried Miss Wilson, taking the child's hand, and bending to kiss the low, sun-burnt brow. "She is n't the only one who wishes it; witness Anne here. And you ought to be ashamed, Eugene, to tease her. She came here to gather flowers for Anne's wreath, and came by my invitation. I'm sure the child has n't too happy a life."

"I did n't mean to tease her," the gentleman said, sobering at once; then smiling, as a soft voice at his elbow echoed, —

"Oh, no! he did n't mean to tease her."

Miss Wilson was still holding the little girl's hand, and looking at her attentively.

"I don't think she is well, Eugene," she said. "Her hands are quite hot, — and see how her eyes burn."

The doctor approached the child, and, in spite of her shrinking back and turning away her face, took her hand, examined her pulse, and then made her show him her

tongue. The little hand was burning hot, the pulse was throbbing full with fever, and the tongue was covered with a thick, white coating, down the centre of which ran an ugly yellow line.

"What in the world is she out for?" exclaimed the physician angrily. "They take no care of children at that place. Here, child! go directly home, and give them this."

He wrote hastily on a slip of paper which he had taken from his pocket, "Rose Paulier has a high fever, and needs immediate attention. It is a shame that she should be anywhere but in bed. Send for the doctor at once."

"I am sorry there is no one to go with her," he said. "But she can go alone, as she came. Go right away now, and give Mrs. Warren this paper."

The child took the paper, and went silently out of the room and down-stairs again, followed by kind words and pitying looks, and by a promise from Miss Meeta that she would come to see her, and bring her the promised wedding-cake just as soon as Rose was well enough to eat it.

It was n't a very pleasant episode in the midst of the bridal party, particularly as not one of the ladies present had had scarlet fever, which was probably the disease that threatened their young visitor. But the company began to arrive, and in a few minutes they had enough to think of beside sickness and poverty.

Meantime, Rose Paulier went down-stairs, and was about going homeward, as she had been bidden; but the place was too attractive, and home too repelling. Beside, she wanted to see what was going on, and what a wedding was like. Nobody was looking, so she crossed the yard a second time, and climbed up into the arbor in the cherry-tree. There she was concealed from all below, but through the flowery branches had a good view of the garden-walk and through the open windows into the parlor. Presently the company began to arrive, not many in number, but exceedingly stylish. First, the doctor's mother and brother, in their carriage, — the lady with a yard of silk trailing behind her, and a real Indian shawl dropping from her shoulders. Then one and another, finally the minister, — an awful personage, in a huge white necktie. From her post of observation, Rose saw the group settle themselves about the parlor,

saw the white-robed bride enter on the doctor's arm, saw the awful minister stand before them a few minutes, saw them join hands, saw the kissing and hand-shaking after, the presenting and eating and sipping of cake and wine. Finally, she saw the company depart, and after them the newly married couple, all the little household following the latter to their carriage, and gazing after them as long as they were visible.

"A very pretty wedding," everybody pronounced it, and everybody was quite right.

When Mrs. Wilson and Miss Wilson and one of the young ladies who was to spend the remainder of the day with them, and the hired girl with her assistant procured for the occasion, had all gone into the house again, Rose came down out of the tree, and went toward the garden-gate. She felt a little dizzy, and, though perfectly familiar with the roads, seemed to have forgotten which way to go. From the parlor window Master Charles Wilson saw the child leave the yard, and, glancing about to be sure that he was not observed, he went out and followed her. He could n't have told why, but this little pauper always drew him as a lodestone draws. He followed her, led by an irresistible attraction. The boy was romantic and imaginative. Perhaps he knew that the slender little creature who hesitated and followed along before him was shaped like an ideal form. May be he could perceive some beauty in the exquisite bare feet, in the low, smooth brow, beneath which those glorious eyes shone so radiantly, in the small, red mouth, in the shy, sweet, earnest ways which had a touch of that premature fascination which is often called natural coquetry. He had often seen this little girl, all the people about knew her, and though pride had prevented his speaking to her, it had not prevented his being bewitched by her.

"How queerly she acts!" he thought, seeing her stop and reel about. He had not known of the scene up-stairs.

Even while he spoke, she stopped short, and, putting both her hands up to her head, gave a faint cry.

"What is the matter? Are you sick?" asked the boy, running to her.

She clung wildly to his hand, and leaned her burning face against it.

"Oh, yes: my head goes round and round," she cried.

He attempted to lead her, but she could not walk; and, after a few minutes, he bravely took her up in his arms, and, with her face nestled into his neck, carried her down the hill. At the foot of the hill the broad road made a turn to the right, but a narrow one led to the left, and in so that the boy walked with his moaning burden. There were woods at both sides for a few rods, then they opened at the right, and there stood a large brick house, with a plain grass-plot in front, and a wooden rail-fence next the road, the bare, bleak look of everything offering a striking contrast to the charmingly adorned residences all about, of which they had occasional glimpses through the trees. Pushing open the gate with his foot, muttering at the same time some word of pity for the child, Charles Wilson approached the front-door of the house just as it opened, showing a coarse and hard-looking matron standing within.

"Mrs. Warren, this child is very sick," the boy explained. "I think she ought to be taken care of."

"Poor Rose!" the woman said, with an air of pitying surprise. "I thought she had a cold, but she would go out. I'll make her some herb-tea right away."

Little Rose might have shrunk at another time, but now she was entirely passive as the woman took her and began to smooth her hair back.

In giving her up, Charles saw the note clenched in Rose Paulier's hand, and read it aloud.

"Bless my stars!" cried the woman, in affright. "Go right away, Mr. Charles. You'll catch the fever." And she unceremoniously shut the door in his face.

"Poor little dear! She'll die as sure as fate," he sadly muttered, leaning on the fence, and looking sorrowfully up at the front of that abode of sorrow. The house at which he looked, and which little Rose Paulier called home, was the poor-house.

There were but very few town poor in Saxon, but these few, after the infamous custom which makes our town charities an injury and an insult to those who are obliged to avail themselves of them, had been given in charge of the lowest bidder, and they fared accordingly. The Warrens were a hard, money-getting, childless couple, who did not feel called upon to feed paupers out of their own pockets, but who looked that their charge were kept clean

and presentable to visitors. That done, their duties were done. Rose Pauler had been with them two years. Her mother had come to Saxon to nurse a sick lady, bringing her child with her, and had fallen sick and died suddenly at her employer's house. There was no one to take charge of the little girl, and their search found no relatives. It was a pity, but there was nothing to do but to send her to the poor-house. To an ordinary poor-house they would on no account have sent the child, who was a dainty little thing, and whose mother was evidently a lady; but then this house was a model of its kind, and Mrs. Warren a very excellent woman. So said the Burkhardt family, at whose house the mother had died, and who had already been sufficiently troubled in the matter, and did not want to be bothered with the child. Mrs. Warren would teach her to sew and keep house, and when she should be old enough they would give her employment. So the rich family, living in splendor in a house that was almost a palace, and with only one son to claim their care, washed their hands of the whole affair. A gold-framed locket containing a miniature which had been around the woman's neck when she died, a pearl ring which she wore, and a little gold watch with a spray of pearl lilies-of-the-valley on the back, they kept to give the child when she should be old enough to take care of them. For the rest, Mrs. Burkhardt felt that she was very charitable and very condescending indeed, if, when she was driving that way, she ordered the footman to go to the door of the poor-house and ask how the little girl was getting along. There were no other children at this establishment, and of course the children of the rich people about would not play with her, and Rose had a lonely time of it. But she had not much work to do, and, aside from poor and insufficient food, and having to sleep alone in an attic where she sometimes could not sleep for fright, might have lived a pleasant enough animal life, wandering about as she listed in summer-time, and coiled in a sunny window in the winter. But children need company even more than adults do, and this child's lonely life was telling on her, wearing her out, saddening her, making her imaginative and morbid. She was ready for the fever when it came, and it clenched her as some fierce, wild creature might.

There had been no mother's eye to note the growing symptoms, to see that the child refused even her scanty food, that she drank ravenously, that her eyes were unusually bright, and her step unusually lagging; and so it chanced that when the eyes of Mrs. Warren were at length opened, and after tedious delay the poor-house doctor at length took the trouble to call on his patient, little Rose lay senseless, and almost past hope.

CHAPTER II.

The Burkhardts were a very grand family, uncommonly grand. They had a genealogy which reached back through the provincial days of this country, and on the one side rose in a great old Dutch family, and on the other an English family equally lofty. Mr. Burkhardt bore the Dutch honors; Mrs. Burkhardt, a Lenox, had the English blue-blood in her veins. These two noble tides were united in the person of their son, Friedrich Clarence Lenox Burkhardt, who did not seem any the better for the mixture. He was yet but a boy of fifteen, but he had already acquired an admirable proficiency in pomposity, conceit, self-indulgence, and skepticism, thus honoring both his nationalities. He was a handsome boy, tall, well-grown, fair, and not without talent. If he had been plain John Smith, a carpenter's son, he would have been considered a boy of fair ability, who might reasonably hope to succeed to his father's trade, and to succeed at it; being Master Friedrich Clarence Lenox Burkhardt, with a genealogy that would reach half way round the world, and a purse that would reach the other half way, it was customary to speak of him as a young man of transcendent ability.

The Burkhardt estate was by far the most imposing in Saxon. It stood on the summit of a low hill about half a mile from the Wilsons' cottage, and its grounds extended down to the dale on all sides. There were lawns, orchards, kitchen and flower gardens, extensive graperies and greenhouses, and clumps of fine old forests, which the lady of the manor liked to call a park. The house was a really noble edifice, built of fine granite as white as marble, and having two long wings and a tower beside the central square pile. The handsome portico in the centre was much admired by people who knew what architecture is, and there

was n't a finer collection of pictures, ornaments, books, and furniture in the city than that in the Burkhardt mansion. This place had been christened Rose Hall by a gentleman whom Mrs. Burkhardt, lofty as she was, did not venture to contradict.

At the time of which we speak, the family were traveling, having taken a fancy to go to England for a few months, and the Hall was in charge of domestics and a superannuated second cousin of the proprietress, one Miss Margaret Fairfield, who had an apartment in a secluded corner of the building, and lived there quite invisible to the gay company that came and went. She was nearly sixty years of age, and in feeble health. Mrs. Burkhardt used to say, when any person had the bad taste to ask for her relative, that poor Cousin Margaret was not able to see company. In truth, Miss Margaret was the scion of a *mesalliance*, as the family considered it, and would have been utterly ignored had it been possible; but since she was well known to be a relative, the only alternative was to hide her. She lived in the great house a somewhat uncomfortable life, not associating much with the family, never seeing their company, yet not allowed to make companions of the seamstress or housekeeper. It was she whom Rose Paulier's mother had been sent for to nurse, and little Rose could just recollect the pretty rooms where she had spent a few days with her mother and a gentle invalid, the wide windows looking out on gardens, the silence, the sweetness, the plenty. The mother's death had been tragical, though the child knew it not. As she felt unwell, the doctor, on calling to see his patient, had prescribed also for the nurse. Mrs. Burkhardt had taken the prescriptions to the apothecary when she went out for her daily ride. Such an act of condescension looked well, and as though she were Christianly anxious for every one under her roof. The apothecary was old and dull, so it was said, and he made a mistake in putting up the nurse's medicine. Mrs. Paulier took her powder on lying down at night, and in five minutes was seized with convulsions. Before morning, she was dead.

Of course there was a great stir in the house, but Mrs. Burkhardt kept the matter close. Since the mischief was done, it was just as well to have as little talk about it as possible. The doctor was discreet, and so were the housekeeper and Miss Fairfield;

and it was given out, and believed, that the stranger had died of cramps. Had any relative appeared, or any near friend who might have authority to inquire, the truth would have been communicated to him; but no such person was forthcoming. Mrs. Paulier was buried at the expense of her employers, and, as we have before said, the child was sent to the poor-house. Miss Fairfield had in vain protested against this latter step, and begged that Rose might be given to her.

"I could keep her here with me, and she would be company for me," the poor lady said. "She need never be any trouble to the family. I'm sure there's room enough. Besides" —

"I object to it," interrupted Mrs. Burkhardt, with unusual asperity. "Her position would be embarrassing to all. Brought up by you as your companion, she could not be called a servant. And I do not choose to bring up such a child in the house with Clarence. She bids fair to be a coquette. I saw her smiling askance when he spoke to her yesterday."

"Besides," pursued the cousin with unwonted courage, resuming her broken sentence, "it seems to me that you are under obligation to take care of her."

Mrs. Burkhardt grew pale as she turned fiercely to the speaker.

"What do you mean?" she demanded.

"Mrs. Paulier became sick from her devoted attention to me, and her death was in consequence of that sickness. Of course you could not help it if the apothecary made a blunder; but still, the fact stands that she came to her death in this house, and that she would not have died if she had not come here."

Mrs. Burkhardt's haughty black eyes were fixed keenly on her cousin while she spoke, and continued steadily to regard her for a moment after she had ended. Then she drew a long breath, and turned decidedly away.

"The child must go," she said.

And the very next day the child went.

It was always a joyful time for Miss Fairfield when the family were away. She was freed from the watchful eyes that were ever on the lookout lest she should lower the family dignity, and, being the only one in the house who was not a servant, felt her own consequence vastly increased. Perhaps the only time when she felt the pride

of blood, or ever really upheld the pretensions of the house of Burkhardt, was when she alone was left to stand against hirelings. Mrs. Conners, the housekeeper, was still invited to her room, but instead of unbending quite to her, and whispering trembling confidences, with one eye on the door, Miss Fairfield received her visitor with gracious condescension, and even while gossiping, contrived to let the woman feel that she should not presume to consider herself an equal.

"I feel very uneasy," she said, one evening, about a week after the doctor's wedding. "What it is, I don't know, but I've been thinking of that poor Mrs. Paulier all day. Last night I dreamed of her. I hope that nothing has happened to the child."

"It is odd how you do take to that little girl," the housekeeper said. "And it's two years now since you saw her."

"I am of a grateful disposition," replied the invalid, drawing herself up a little. "Ingratitude is a vice of low minds. I never forget a benefit. That child's mother nursed me like a sister—no, not like any sister I ever had, like an angel, I should say. To be sure she was hired; but that signifies nothing. Money does n't buy affection, nor such tender care as she gave me. For two nights I suffered agonies, and yet nothing could be done for me. I have suffered so before and since, and my nurse always goes to sleep. What is the use of remaining awake when nothing can be done? So while I groan, she snores. But Mrs. Paulier was different. She sat by me, she spoke softly and soothingly, she wiped the perspiration from my face, she made me think that there was one, at least, who could not sleep while I suffered. No child could be more tender to a mother. Besides, though she had wages, she was not a common person, she was a lady. I know a lady when I see her, and Mrs. Paulier was of gentle blood. She bore all the marks. There was n't a coarse fibre in her. Indeed, she intimated as much to me, and gave me clearly to understand that with her nursing was a labor of love, and that she would n't take care of everybody."

"I suppose she went to those who sent for her," said the housekeeper, somewhat stung, feeling herself touched by those distinctions of gentle and plebeian in those who work for a living.

"By no means!" replied Miss Fairfield,

with spirit. "She was a friend of Doctor Malcome's, in the city, and he mentioned to her any places where he thought she would like to go. It happened oddly enough that he died while she was here. I think he knew about her family and affairs, and would have done something for the child if he had lived. She had only been out to nurse twice before she came here, once to poor dear Mrs. General Sammerville when she broke her leg getting out of her carriage, and once to Mrs. Governor Smalley's when she lost her little girl. In both cases there was a servant to do work under the nurse, and Mrs. Paulier was quite like one of the family."

"It was an awful thing," said the housekeeper, irrelevantly.

Miss Fairfield shuddered. "Yes," she said, following the other's tack, "And I think that apothecary ought to have been arrested, and so I told Cousin Barbara and Doctor Marston. But they did n't like the eclat of such a thing. If anything should happen to bring the matter out, it would have an awkward look. It certainly was our duty to complain."

"I'm sure Mrs. Burkhardt did everything that could be done," the housekeeper said, testily. "It would have been putting herself out a good deal to have a trial, and it would have been a shame for such a lady to have to go into court and testify, and have her name in the daily papers, and be questioned and cross-questioned by lawyers. Besides, it would have done no good. Then, that poor Mr. Somes never put up a dose of medicine afterward, and he almost went crazy about the mistake he had made. Tom Somes says it was the death of him."

"But supposing the trial had been dropped," Miss Fairfield said, yielding to these arguments; "there was no need of sending that dear child to the poor-house. It was a shame, if Cousin Barbara did do it. That little girl was just what I want, and would have been like an own daughter to me. If I could walk, I would have gone to see her this very day."

The housekeeper said nothing. She was jealous of this child whom both her mistress and Miss Fairfield seemed to make of far too much consequence; but she knew too well how much stronger Miss Fairfield was in promise than in performance, and had little fear of a visitation of paupers.

"I feel so uneasy," the invalid said again

after a silence; "I do believe I am superstitious about that child and her mother. It seems as though they haunt me. Let us have tea, Mrs. Connors, and see if that will drive off these vapors."

The curtains were drawn away to let in all the soft May twilight, and a round table was set up to the invalid's sofa. The housekeeper rang a bell, and in a few minutes the housemaid, the only other female servant left in the place, appeared with a waiter, bearing supper for the two. Under the genial influence of tea, toast and jam, the housekeeper's temper softened, and Miss Fairfield's spirits brightened. Both felt more inclined for an old-fashioned, confidential gossip.

"I think it strange that Barbara does n't write," Miss Fairfield said, laying down her napkin and sinking back among her pillows. "I am afraid she is n't pleased with her visit. When matters go rightly, she sends letters in clouds. She always likes to communicate good news."

"Yes," said the housekeeper, cautiously, perceiving that something was coming, and anxious lest she should frighten away the little news-bird if she said too much.

"Of course you have the interests of the family at heart, and are perfectly trustworthy in regard to all their affairs," the lady continued, in a confidential tone.

"Certainly," said the other, expansively; "I've been here now ten years, and if it were my own mother and children, I could n't be more bound up in 'em. Mrs. Burkhardt knows that I'd stand by the family through thick and thin. I'm sure I've kept mum about Mrs. Paulier, and shall to my dying day. And as to the way Master Clarence does carry on sometimes, red-hot irons could n't draw it from me."

"You're a faithful creature," Miss Fairfield said, affectionately, "and we all think the world of you. Cousin Barbara considers you a treasure. I only wish she were as well satisfied with Mr. Stanley."

"He's a relation of hers, is n't he?" asked the housekeeper, after a pause, seeing that something was expected of her.

"Oh, yes!" was the answer, Miss Fairfield now thoroughly under way. "He is second cousin to Barbara on her mother's side, as I am on her father's, and he is the millionaire of the family. He is very eccentric, and dresses and looks more like a pauper than a gentleman. When he was here

years ago, she was tried half to death. But after all he is a good soul, though the greatest tyrant in creation. It was he who bought this place, you know. That was sixteen years ago, when Barbara was first married; and he would n't let her have it unless she promised that it should always be called Rose Hall. He named it after his first love. They say that when he was twenty years old he fell in love with a cousin of his, and that he never got over it. The poor thing died."

"Quite romantic?" remarked Mrs. Connors, desirous to please.

"Yes. There is, indeed, an element of romance in the family," said the ancient maiden, with a look of mysterious consciousness. "He is not the only one who has remained single in consequence of an early disappointment. Well, as I was saying, Mr. Stanley lives in England. His father and uncle went there when they were young men, and entered into the tea-trade, making themselves rich beyond count. The brothers died, and Mr. Stanley, who was the only one left of the two families, inherited their property."

"So Mrs. Stanley gave Mr. Burkhardt this place?" said the housekeeper.

"Well—yes. That is, he just the same as gave it to her. When Barbara wrote him that she was going to be married, he came over. Her family were not rich, but Mr. Burkhardt's was. Of course, among people of our class riches are not considered to be of such supreme importance as they are among parvenus; but still Barbara wished to make a good appearance. They lived very elegantly in town, but there were seven girls, and it takes a large fortune to fit out seven girls. Well, Mr. Stanley came, and he was most generous. He gave Barbara a good deal of money, and kept buying presents for her. Between you and I, though, I don't think that he took a great fancy to her. Cousin Barbara is a very fine woman, and a lady of the very highest style; but she has not a winning manner. That must have been the reason why he acted so oddly afterward. But he took a liking to Burkhardt, and when he found him inclined to enter the tea-trade, made him his partner in a branch house here. I've heard it said that he gave Barbara ten thousand dollars in presents. Riding out of town one day, he saw this place, and took a fancy to it. A Mr. Bertram had just built it and failed.

Mr. Stanley bought it on the spot. Of course everybody thought that he meant to come here and live, and I believe myself that such was his intention at first. But after he had furnished the house, and got a troop of men at work on the grounds, he suddenly changed his mind, and invited Barbara and her husband to live in it, rent free, till he should call for it. So it has gone on ever since. He has paid the taxes, and they have lived in the house. At first it was as much as they could afford to keep up the establishment; but Mr. Burkhardt soon got rich, and then one of the first things he did was to offer to buy the place. Mr. Stanley wrote that he was n't going to sell it, and asked them why they could n't be content to live in it just as though it were their own. Of course he means to give it to them, for he has n't chick nor child, and must be now about sixty years of age. But he won't give them the least satisfaction about it, and seems to like to keep them in suspense. It is n't likely he would think of coming here to live at this late day, and it is still less likely that he would sell the place to any one else and turn Barbara out after she had made the Hall her home for so many years."

"Then it does n't belong to them, after all," was the housekeeper's conclusion.

"Certainly it does!" exclaimed the lady, sharply, somewhat alarmed at having gone so far in her tale-telling. "It is merely a form that stands in the way of their title. To lip such a thing would be as much as your place is worth. Cousin Barbara has gone to England on that business now. If she can see and talk with Mr. Stanley, she can persuade him to make the place over to her. Besides, they are rich enough to buy another as fine as this, if such a place could be found."

"How long is it since Mr. Stanley was here last?" the housekeeper asked.

"Sixteen years. He came when Barbara was married, and that was sixteen years next month. She was married in a white satin dress with point-lace flounces, and had six bridesmaids."

There was silence for a while then. The housekeeper had heard time and again the particulars of Mrs. Barbara Burkhardt's wedding, and the grand doings on that occasion. Presently she took another tack.

"Perhaps the things that the nurse left might tell who her friends are," she said.

"I saw a beautiful miniature about her neck."

"There was nothing that would afford a clew," the invalid replied. "The miniature was of her husband, who died long ago. She herself showed it to me one day. The ring and watch were very old, though nice, and were probably given her by her husband. She told me that she had no near relations, and that no one was under any obligation to help her. Since her husband died, she had been living as companion to an old lady. The old lady died, leaving her fortune to some public charities, and Mrs. Paulier found herself homeless. It was there that she told Doctor Malcome, the old lady's physician, that she would go out nursing. Oh, there's no one who would take care of her, but if her connections were found, they might take the child out of the poor-house. I thought that the poor thing wanted to say something when she died, but she could n't speak. She took my hand, though, and put the child's into it, and I understood that she wanted me to befriend her. Dear me!" cried the invalid, with nervous impatience, "I do feel so anxious about that child. Tomorrow morning I want Betty to go down and ask how she is, and carry some cake to her. Perhaps I'll have her come up to see me."

Mrs. Connors lifted her eyebrows, but said nothing, and the two sat a while listening to the soft clash of flowery branches that were stirred by the light breeze, and the fall of a brook that flowed visibly through the dale below. Presently the sound of carriage wheels mingled with these softer noises, and came nearer. No longer on the public road, it turned up the avenue toward the Hall, and slowly approached the door.

"Bless me!" cried the housekeeper, starting up, "who can be coming here tonight?"

"It can't be any visitor," Miss Fairfield replied, listening attentively. "Everybody knows that the family have been gone these three months."

Their cogitations were interrupted by a loud peal of the bell, and by impatient voices outside. The two women looked each other in the face a moment at the sound of those voices; then the housekeeper rushed out of the room and down-stairs.

Miss Fairfield seldom walked, but spent the greater part of her time on a sofa; but she managed to get up and follow Mrs. Connors to the head of the stairs. The outer

door was opened as she reached the balusters, and the first words she heard were in Mrs. Barbara Burkhardt's rich but sharp voice.

"For mercy's sake, were we not expected, Mrs. Connors?"

Miss Fairfield shivered as if she had just received a cold *douche*, and, stealing noiselessly back to her own room, silently shut the door.

Her hour of freedom was over. She was lady of the manor no longer; and, what was worse, the real lady had returned in ill-temper. She seated herself, and considered in what manner she could possibly be responsible for the mistake which evidently existed.

She had hardly begun to puzzle over the subject, when the door of the sitting-room was flung unceremoniously open, and a lady came flouncing in.

"How do you do, Cousin Margaret? I must beg permission to sit here a while, since not another room in the house is habitable. Why in the world our despatch was not received is more than I can understand. We came to New York yesterday, and staid there a day on purpose to give you time to prepare for us. It is certainly very annoying."

"I am astonished," said Miss Fairfield very sincerely. "We have n't heard a word. I was looking for a letter by this steamer, thinking it possible you might come soon; and only a few minutes ago I was remarking to the housekeeper that it was very strange that you had not written. Won't Mr. Burkhardt and Clarence come in here?"

"I suppose not," said the lady of the house rather ungraciously. "They are trying to get into their rooms."

Mrs. Barbara Burkhardt, though in very ill-temper at present, was rather a handsome and a very stylish-looking woman. She might have been forty years of age, was tall, broad-shouldered, had a marble-white complexion, with black hair and eyes, and large, regular features. She had an intellectual head, the forehead rather too high for generally accepted female beauty, and a face expressive of pride and talent.

"What is the news?" she asked presently, after having sat a few minutes tapping the carpet with the toe of her shoe.

"Nothing of importance," Miss Fairfield

replied, trying to recollect what had happened. "Doctor Thayer and Anne Wilson were married last week."

"So he really married her!" the lady exclaimed. "He is a fool! With his name and talents and prospects, he should have done better. If he must marry a red-cheeked simpleton, why had n't he taken one who had money? I have no patience with him. If he had married Jane Seldon, as I told him plainly I wanted him to, I would have employed him. Doctor Marston is really getting too old. But, as it is, I won't have him; and, what is more, I will get another doctor here."

"Anne is a very sweet girl," Miss Fairfield ventured to say.

"Sweet!" exclaimed her companion contemptuously, and then relapsed into silence again. Presently she recollected her wrappings, and began impatiently to pull her gloves off, toss her shawl back, and untie the strings of her bonnet. "I might just as well have staid at home!" she said, in as low a tone as her anger would permit. "We took our journey for nothing."

"Won't he sell?" asked the cousin eagerly.

"No; and he is as stubborn and aggravating as ever. He promises, though, that he will not sell the place to any one else. It is my opinion that he only does it to have power over me. He likes to think that I know he can put me out of the house at any time if I should happen to displease him. I tell you, Margaret, that man is capable of anything. He does n't care a fig what any one says or thinks. He follows his own whims. I got so vexed that I started off with the very scantiest of leave-taking. And what do you think he is going to do?" the lady concluded, taking a seat by her cousin's sofa, and becoming a little more friendly, since she had the opportunity of venting her anger on some one else.

"He is n't coming here?" exclaimed Miss Fairfield.

"How could you know?" said the lady pettishly, vexed at the other's penetration. "Yes, he is coming here, and what for the Lord only knows. I believe him to be insane. He certainly does n't care anything about me; and as to Clarence, he really seemed to take a dislike to him, though the boy took every pains to please him. He does like Mr. Burkhardt, but I don't imagine he is sufficiently in love with him to

cross the ocean in order to see him. He has absolutely no other friend here. It is the greatest piece of folly."

"When will he come?" Miss Fairfield asked, rather wondering at the excessive annoyance which the proposed visit caused Mrs. Burkhardt.

"Oh, in a month or two; and perhaps sooner."

"He may be more amiable when he gets here," the cousin said, desiring to soothe. "I don't see how he can go away without giving you the house."

"He will be hateful!" exclaimed the lady, rising to pace the floor. "I almost wish some accident may prevent his coming." Glancing at the invalid as she spoke, and seeing the look of astonishment on her face, she added fretfully, "You don't understand at all, Margaret. Of course I do not want to displease him seriously, and every hour that I spend in his company I am in danger of doing so. He is opinionated, eccentric, and suspicious, and I have to hold myself in as I would hold a horse that wants to run away. I am sure he sees me fretting, and is delighted by it. How can I feel secure that I may not fling out something that will enrage him?"

"To be sure," was all the reply the other could think of.

Here Jeanette, Mrs. Burkhardt's maid, put her head in at the door to ask where the lady would have her supper.

"Why, we may as well have it here," she replied, glancing round the pleasant, airy sitting-room. "It is the only well-aired room in the house. The dining-room is like a vault. And, Jeanette, will you ask Mr. Burkhardt and Mr. Clarence to come here?"

The other two came in presently, the young man greeting his mother's cousin somewhat carelessly, then sitting down by a window and sulkily whistling out into the night while he waited for supper. Mr. Burkhardt was a fine-looking man, blonde, and with a pleasant face. Looking at him, one perceived where the son got his fair hair, blue eyes, and fresh complexion. The gentleman, though like the others a little out of temper at the lack of preparation for their coming, gave the invalid a polite and friendly greeting, and did what neither of the others had done, asked for her health, and how she had got along during their absence. She, also, had for him a different

welcome. "I am glad to see you back," she said, with a smile of real pleasure.

"Well, I declare, I am complimented!" exclaimed the wife, with a laugh which was not very mirthful. "Cousin Margaret is glad to see you back, but she only expressed herself astonished to see me."

Miss Fairfield colored, and was silent. She could not say that a pleasant greeting was likely to call forth a pleasant reply. Supper coming in created a diversion, and by the time it was over their rooms were ready for the travelers.

When the invalid was alone, Mrs. Conners came to her room again a minute. "It is my opinion she's got her labor for her pains," she whispered. "She's come home as cross as two sticks."

"Hush—sh—sh!" whispered Miss Fairfield, glancing fearfully toward the door. The reign of terror had begun again, and she was no longer the grand lady.

There was another arrival in Saxon that same evening, but the comers were expected, and came with smiles upon their faces. When the sound of carriage wheels was heard at the gate of the Wilson cottage, Charles Wilson ran down the garden-walk to give his brother and sister welcome, and Miss Meeta came out and met them on the piazza, giving each a hearty kiss.

"Where is mamma?" exclaimed the bride, in alarm, noting not only her mother's absence, but a certain quiet and lowness of speech in the two others.

"Mamma is not very well," Meeta said gently. "She has been in bed since yesterday. I think it is nothing but a cold."

"Come right up and see her, Eugene," cried the young wife, going hastily toward the stairs. But her sister stopped her.

"Not now, Anne. She was asleep when I came down, and it might give her a start. She had some headache this afternoon, and I want to keep her as quiet as possible."

While speaking, Meeta exchanged a quick glance with her brother-in-law. "Yes, Anne," he said immediately, "we will wait until after supper. You should never startle one who is sick with headache."

The young wife looked from her sister to her husband, then turned to her brother who was standing by. "Charles, what is the matter with mamma?" she asked. The boy hesitated, and looked to Meeta to answer.

"Come into the parlor, Anne, and I will

tell you all about it," her sister said cheerfully. "It is nothing to be frightened at. Only don't let mamma hear us talking in the entry."

Clinging to her husband's arm, Anne Thayer went into the parlor and sat down, pale and trembling, overcome by a terrible presentiment of trouble.

"Now see how foolish she is," Meeta said laughingly, patting, then kissing her sister's pale cheek. "Don't come home with such a face as that. Mamma has taken cold, and is a little feverish; and, instead of letting her go about the house in a miserable manner, half sick and half well, I insisted upon her going to bed yesterday. I was in hopes that she would be able to be up when you came home, and so was she; but she is not. She is probably going to have a short run of fever; but that is nothing to make you look so frightened, Anna."

"Let us see her right away," urged the younger sister. "Go up and find out if she is awake. I can't be content till I see her."

"Well, since you are so silly," Meeta said, smiling. "But first let me take off your bonnet."

"No: Eugene will," said the bride. "Go now."

"O Eugene, I feel dreadfully!" she exclaimed the moment her sister had left the room. "Something is going to happen." And she leaned against his bosom and burst into tears. The shock from her joyful coming home had been too sudden.

He soothed her as a loving young husband might, took off her bonnet and shawl, kissed, coaxed, and tried to re-assure her.

"Mamma is awake," Meeta said, coming down. "But she won't allow you to come up till you have had supper. She told me to bid you welcome home."

"I can't eat a mouthful till I have seen her," sobbed the bride.

"Now do be reasonable, dear," her husband urged tenderly. "If your mother has any fever, it is not prudent for you to go into the room both tired and fasting. She understands that perfectly. I will go up if you wish; but I won't allow you to go till you have eaten. See, now, I begin to play the tyrant." And he fondly smoothed the hair that was ruffled against his breast.

"Well, do you go," she said, "and tell mamma that I am glad to get home again, and that I won't be kept from her ten minutes longer. Go and see just how she is."

The doctor noiselessly followed his sister-in-law up-stairs, and stopped on the landing for a word before going into the chamber. "Well?" he said.

"I sent for Doctor Marston this morning," she whispered, "and he says that it is typhus fever. You know fevers are prevalent. He thinks we must be very careful."

In a few minutes the two came downstairs again.

"How is she?" asked Anne, who was awaiting them at the foot of the stairs.

"As Meeta says, a little feverish," the husband replied, drawing his wife into the dining-room. "And I really wish, Anne, that you could deny yourself the pleasure of seeing her till morning."

She began to exclaim, but he gently stopped her.

"I don't mean to insist, my dear," he said. "But your mother herself advises it, and I agree. It is for you to decide. You have never had this fever, and you are now in such a state that you would be very likely to take it. I would n't be so selfish as to keep you from your mother; and in the morning you can go in and take care of her all the forenoon."

"In the morning it will be too late!" the daughter cried. "You are trying to deceive me. I shall go now."

"Well, at least take a cup of tea first," her husband said.

She would not sit, but took the cup of tea her sister poured for her, and drank a part of it. Then her husband led her upstairs.

The room was darkened, rather than lighted, for more light would have entered from out-doors, had the curtains been lifted, than came from the shaded lamp in the fireplace.

"O mamma! I am so sorry!" cried the young wife, running to throw herself on the bed. "I never dreamed of your being sick. Are you very sick? Eugene can cure you now he has come. Why had n't you sent for us?"

The mother tenderly smoothed the tear-wet cheek that pressed her pillow, and after a little while said, —

"I am glad you are come, my darling. But you must n't take it so hard. We must be resigned to the will of God."

"But, mamma, Eugene says it is only a little fever," the daughter persisted. "You will be better tomorrow, won't you?"

"If it is best, I shall," the mother replied gently but faintly.

"Anne, you will tire mamma," her sister interposed. "You had better not make her talk any more."

"You can come in the morning and tell me all about your journey, my dear," her mother said, in the same fainting voice. "But now you had better go and rest."

After much persuasion they got her out, and even succeeded in making her eat something, but it was impossible to inspire her with much courage. "Something dreadful will happen," she persisted in saying, not being able to bring herself to speak more clearly. If the doctor was anxious, no one would have known it. He had too much professional coolness, and was too adroit in parrying questions, to commit himself. His only fear seemed to be for his wife. Meeta went about quiet and gentle but pale. Any one less absorbed than her sister and brother-in-law might have noticed a slight compression of the mouth, and that her manner showed strong self-control rather than calmness; but those higher and more unselfish natures seldom receive so much sympathy, and the elder daughter bore alone her burden of sorrowful anticipation. Not only that: she bore also the burden of care and work. Anne helped a little in a fitful and childish way, but gave her sister more trouble than she saved her. She would sit by her mother hour after hour, refusing to go out into the air till her husband would come and oblige her to go. Her sister was provoked into one reproof.

"You will make yourself ill, Anne," she said. "You should never sit by mamma more than an hour without taking the air."

"I can't be so selfish as to be thinking of myself," Anne said almost fretfully.

"The truest unselfishness is to think just so much of yourself that you may not force others to be anxious about you," her sister replied quietly. "Now, not only Eugene and I, but mamma also, are troubled about you, and we have all enough to think of. Mamma speaks of you every time I go in, and says that you will be ill. It frets her. Beside, you sit by her and cry and kiss her; and a sick person should always see cheerful or at least calm faces."

"How can I look calm and cheerful when mamma is so ill?" cried Mrs. Thayer indignantly.

"Anne," said her sister almost severely,

"do you think that I love mamma less than you do? If I weep, I do not let her or any one else see and be fretted by my tears; and I take what care I can of myself, that I may not fall ill, and put somebody to trouble and anxiety on my account."

Anne Thayer was not a fool, and she saw that her sister was right. But, unwilling to acknowledge it, she took refuge in tears.

Mrs. Wilson could scarcely be called dangerously ill; but at her age a fever requires careful watching, and the doctor knew that a few days would tell the story. The sick woman quietly made every preparation for death, and held herself in readiness for whatever might happen.

On the second evening after the return of the young couple, Charles Wilson, who had been out, came into the parlor where his brother-in-law sat alone. "You know little Rose Paulier?" the boy said.

"Yes," the doctor replied, quickly looking up, prepared to hear what was to follow.

"Well, she died yesterday, and was buried today," Charles went on; and, sitting down by a table, dropped his face to it and burst into tears.

"Why, Charlie?" exclaimed his brother, going to him.

"Eugene, is my mother going to die?" the boy asked, wiping his eyes, and looking intently into the doctor's face.

Doctor Thayer took his brother's hand, and looked at him with kind and solemn eyes.

"Charlie, I don't know," he said. "I shall know in a few days. Be a man, whatever happens. There are only you and Meeta to hold up. You know Anne breaks down entirely, poor child! Be a man, Charlie?"

The boy struggled nobly with his emotion, choked and swallowed it down. "I will do the best I can," he whispered, not able to speak louder.

Doctor Thayer went up to the sick-room, and left directions for the night with the nurse. He then went to his chamber; and, lying down beside his wife, whom he had persuaded to go to bed, coaxed and petted her a while, winning from her a promise to allow him to go out to see a patient. "I may not be able to get in till late," he said. "And I want you to try and sleep. Your draught will soon work. Mother is comfortable, and when I come in I will step

into her chamber again. I think that she will have a good night."

Doctor Thayer, as soon as the arrangements for his marriage had been made, and when it had been decided that he was to board at the Wilsons', had built him an office there. It was a small building, connected with the cottage by a covered passage, and having an entrance on a side street. In the summer-time, when the trees were in full leaf, this office was hardly visible from the house, the windows being still further covered and hidden by a hedge of thorn.

The doctor felt very nervous this evening. Though he would not own it even to himself, his wife's want of self-control was a burden to him. He was also anxious on her account, and on her mother's. It was impossible that he should think of sleep. Beside, fevers were prevailing on an alarming extent, and he had his hands full. Coming down-stairs, he put on his hat and went out, first glancing about, then taking the road toward the poor-house. He was a little doubtful of success in his errand, but it was worth trying. He knew Warren, the poor-house keeper, and that the man was fond of money. The only doubt was on account of the Burkhardts. If they had remained away a little longer, all would have been well; and, as it was, perhaps their coming would make no difference.

He reached the house just in time. Mr. Warren himself, in his shirt-sleeves, with a lamp in his hand, was going about locking up for the night. The doctor tapped faintly on the side-light of the front-door, and after a moment the man opened it and came out, knowing what the errand was the moment he saw Doctor Thayer's face.

"Twenty dollars!" said the doctor, in a whisper.

"I don't dare, doctor," the man replied, also in a whisper. "Mrs. Burkhardt might change her mind."

"What does she say?" asked the other impatiently.

"Why, she was sorry the child had n't been buried with her mother, but supposed that it was too late now."

"There must be no disinterments in this sickly season," the doctor said decidedly,

"and I shall tell the selectmen so to-morrow. Tell your wife to plant a rosebud over the little thing's grave, and it will be all right. Mrs. Burkhardt won't trouble herself if any one will give her an excuse to avoid doing so."

The two men stood for some time longer talking, then Mr. Warren went into the house again, and the doctor went homeward. But instead of going to the front-gate, he turned into the little street that ran by the side of the cottage, and softly entered his office by means of the key which he carried in his pocket. His first step when there was to close the tight outside shutters. As he drew them to, they touched the branches of the trees and flowering shrubs, and shook down showers of heavy dewdrops, and set the rich perfumes flowing in fuller clouds. The night was lovely, fresh, still, and starlight; but he shut it all out, carefully drawing the curtains, and placing screens around a table at the upper end of the office. This done, he lighted an argand lamp that hung over the table, on which, by means of reflectors, he turned the full brilliancy of its clustered flames. Then he brought out a case of instruments, a pair of gloves, a basin, and a towel. Finally, he went noiselessly out and walked around the office. Not a ray of light shone from the closely muffled windows. Assured of that, he seated himself on the doorstep, and waited.

It might have been two hours before he heard a careful step approaching, and in a few minutes a man came up to the office door, bearing a burden in his arms. Not a word passed between the two as the doctor received in his arms this burden, and going with it into his office, shut the door and locked it behind him. The other man went away as noiselessly as he had come.

Doctor Thayer carried his burden to the table at the upper end of the office, and laid it there. Then, folding back first a dark old shawl, then a veil of white cloth, he revealed the lovely waxen face of poor little Rose Paulier.

"Dear little creature!" he said, an impulse of tender pity stirring for a moment his professional composure. "It was a pity she should die!"

RALPH HUNTINGTON'S TRIAL.

TRANSCRIBED BY MARY A. DENISON.

[NOTE.—I lately read an account of a trial which produced a very strong impression on my mind. The man was hung—circumstances were strongly against him—but his persistent declaration of innocence affected me indescribably, the more as I came near suffering myself for a crime that was committed not so many years ago. I think I will tell my story—plain, unvarnished, for I am not, never was, and probably never shall be eloquent, though I have been a public speaker for years. But my experience has made me extremely cautious how I convict men of whose reputed crimes I have no direct proof. They call me too merciful—my brother lawyers—but it is a solemn thing to send a soul to its final account. R. H.]

CHAPTER I.

ROSE WINDLE.

I SAW Rose Windle first when she was two months old. You may laugh at me, but it is true as gospel. I fell in love with her at that moment.

I was called a handsome child, and the servants all flattered and favored me. One day Nurse Hannah, seeing me playing outside the high granite steps leading to the entrance of the great house, asked me if I would like to see the new baby.

Now this new baby was an object of great importance. I had heard of nothing else since its advent into this breathing world; its wardrobe, its christening, its beauty. Papa Windle was a millionaire—you have heard of Windle the great manufacturer. He lived in splendid style, and knew how to spend his money as well as invest it. He had married a very beautiful, proud and lazy woman, and little Rose was their only child.

I think I was called precocious. Having no brothers, sisters nor little playmates, I was thrown a great deal into the society of older people than myself, and my father made me his companion and confidante. He was a strange man, my father, at least I thought him so, then. Tall, grave and gentlemanly, mixing but little with the other servants, and almost hated by them for his singular reticence which they could not understand, and called pride, I heard visitors often speak in this manner:

"So that's your gardener, Windle. Upon my word he's quite a genteel fellow."

"Yes," would be the reply, "and worth his weight in gold. I don't know what I should do without Robbins."

"Does he always talk like that?"

"Uses correct language, very. Puts me to shame, sometimes—this is his boy," for perhaps I would be standing near.

"Indeed! what a beautiful little fellow!" And sometimes I was offered pennies, sometimes sweetmeats. If the former, I generally threw my head back in a fashion peculiarly my own, and refused almost indignantly. My father had told me never to receive it; if confections, well, the temptation was great, and I have a sweet tooth yet.

But the baby; I jumped with delight when told that I might see it. I had listened to wonderful stories, day after day, and had a mental inventory of her accomplishments; when she had first smiled, when she had caught at something bright, when she had seemed to take notice of a picture that hung up in the nursery, and how like the picture she was herself. "The sweetest mortal baby," the nurse said, "that she had ever seen in all her born days," and how often that same speech had been uttered the last twenty years, nobody knew.

But I was to be taken into the great house now for my first introduction to this wonderful creature. I had never, in all my life of seven long years, seen so young a child, my birth having taken place the first year my father settled as head-gardener at Windle house, long before the rich manufacturer brought a wife home.

Up the high marble steps, into the beautiful hall, where the rich hues of stained glass fell over me like a cloud full of splendors, up into the handsome nursery, where

[Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1866, by THOMAS & TALBOT, Boston, Mass., in the Office of the Librarian of Congress, Washington.]

pretty little Lettice Headly, having helped to dress the little creature, was admiring it at her leisure.

I remember to this day the thrill of delight that ran through my nerves, at sight of that beautiful child; the careful scrutiny I made, heedless of the smiles that were exchanged by upper and under nurse; how softly and reverently I touched the golden lustre of her hair; how earnestly I looked into the soft blue eyes, for even then she was a miracle of beauty.

It was a long time before I thought I could leave her, and then her sweet little face haunted me. When I went home I could think and talk of nothing else, until exhausted by my childish play and past pleasure, I fell asleep upon the lounge in the keeping-room.

I was awakened by hearing my father come in, but laid quite still, thinking of the baby image I had seen.

"Where is Ralph?" asked my father.

"Asleep on the lounge. He seems to enjoy the rest so much, I think we had better take tea without him," my mother replied.

"Very well; he's not ill, is he?"

"O no! but you should have seen how delighted he was when he came home. He had been to see the new little lady, and it set him wild."

"What! Windle's little one—humph!"

"Why, Hal," said my mother, laughing, "what do you think he would say to hear you call him Windle?"

"I don't know, and don't care. I'm his equal, anyway, if he don't think so. The time may come, though, when he will; I may be a wealthier man than he is, yet."

"What! on your gardener's wages?" laughed my mother; and as I looked at her through half-closed eyes, I thought her prettier than the new baby. I had never noticed before how soft and large her blue eyes were, what a lovely rose-color tinted either cheek, nor how her yellow hair, deeper in color than little Rose Windle's, rippled back from her low white forehead. I seem to see her now behind the small tea-urn, her happy laugh ringing out at some sally of my father's, deepening the dimples in her cheeks.

"Well, there's one thing sure," said my father, "Windle is no happier with his wife and child than I am with mine."

"Perhaps he's not as happy," returned my mother, with a meaning smile.

"Perhaps not; I don't see how he can be happy with that woman. She never condescends to speak with, or look at any one, and the airs she puts on when going out to drive, are sickening."

"I've seen her," laughed my mother. "She's worse since little Rose came."

"It would be curious though—" my father smiled absently.

"What would be curious?"

"If our Ralph here should marry Rose Windle."

My mother gave a little cry.

"Why, Hal, what an idea?"

"Such things have been; who would have thought,"—he paused a moment, smiled, then added, with a look I can never forget, "that you would have married me?"

"O Hal! a poor orphan like myself, homeless, almost friendless, keeping school for a mere pittance, boarding round among such people! I'm sure I had nothing to boast of but a tolerable face and an honest heart."

"But, my darling, you might have had Windle."

CHAPTER II.

AN AFFRONT.

MY mother put both hands up to her face.

"The poor, lean, chalk-lipped man!" she cried; "but O Hal! I was sorely tempted before I saw you. I hope I should have been true to myself, and I knew he intended honorable marriage, but I'm so glad!"

Her beaming eyes were fixed upon my father, now, and young as I was I understood their expression.

"I don't think Windle has quite forgiven you, yet, for marrying his gardener," said my father, rising from the table, and placing his chair back.

"I have often wondered, myself, why you chose so very humble an occupation," said my mother.

"You have?" He seemed somewhat surprised.

"How could I help it? You are a man of refinement and education. You talk better English now than Windle can, and your tastes are so very expensive," she pointed to the silver tea-urn.

"True, I did spend a considerable on that little trifle, but it is worth all it cost, it gives me such satisfaction in looking at it; even your pretty face looks prettier behind it. But this boy must be waked up," and ac-

cordingly I was treated with a pat and a kiss, to which I responded by opening my eyes.

My mother had been my earliest teacher. As I grew older, from seven to ten, and from ten to twelve, I was sent to a select school. All this time, remember, I was paying my devoirs to Miss Rose. The little lady of six, a rarely beautiful child, was very fond of me. All the servants were my good friends, though I believe the majority of them disliked my father. Lettice Headly would often search for me when it was her turn to take the child out, sure that it could be in no safer hands than mine. The child grew very fond of me. I was her "big boy," as she called me, and she was lavish with her smiles and kisses. As for the "big boy," she could have done anything with him, her white fingers led him where she would. She was his idol then, as now.

At seventeen I was very tall for my age. One day Mr. Windle was walking down the garden with his hands behind him—his usual habit. My father was grafting some dwarf pear trees. I had seen before that Robbins the gardener was latterly no great favorite of the rich manufacturer.

"Well, Robbins, what are you going to do with this boy of yours?"

"Boy!" my cheeks flushed, hotly.

"I am going to send him to college, sir."

"Pooh, pooh! too ambitious, Robbins; you do wrong, I think. Why not have him learn some good trade?"

My father's eyes flashed, I could see, though he was looking down.

"He shows no predilection that way, sir," was my father's answer; "And if he did, a thorough education would do him no harm."

"O, of course not, of course not," said the rich man, with a condescending nod, "only—"

"You think I am educating him above his station, is that it?" And my father waxed his thread, busily.

"Well, perhaps I did have some such thought," said Windle, slowly.

"Did you never hear of a poor man's son rising to eminence in this country?"

"O ye-s, ye-s!" said Windle, but the words came reluctantly. "Still this spirit of aspiration, you know—"

"Is the heritage of an American free-man," said my father, speaking quickly.

At that moment beautiful Rose Windle came up the path, never lifting her eyes. She seemed searching for something. Look-

ing up suddenly, she saw me; her father, leaning over the fanciful iron fence, was somewhat hidden.

"O Ralph! dear Ralph!" she cried, delightedly, "you'll find it, I know."

I saw my father turn away to hide a quiet smile; I saw the lovely face of the twelve year old girl in all its bright winning childish beauty turned to me for assistance, as it often had been before. My heart beat with wild worship, with fear, too.

She had lost the little ring I gave her, a childish bauble, made of horsehair, but which she seemed to value more than all her golden store.

"Rose Windle!" thundered her father.

She started with something like a shriek.

"O father! I did not see you."

"You will go into the house, miss. Dear Ralph!" I heard him mutter, as he turned away; "that will do, upon my soul, that will do."

"Now, Rafe, we shall catch it," said my father.

"I hate that man!" was my only exclamation, for I had seen the downcast look and the blush of mortification in the face that I loved best, ay, more than father or mother.

"Whatever did you do yesterday, Mr. Ralph?" asked the pretty Lettice, the next day, as I met her, intent on some errand for her little mistress.

"What did I do?"

"Yes. I was busy with Miss Rose's dress, and O, it's a beauty, and in it she looks like a fairy. You see there are three rows of *chinelle*—"

"Never mind that, Lettice," I said, "tell me what Mr. Windle had to say about me."

"O!—well, I was in the little room that leads off left from the hall, and I heard him come in after Miss Rose, quite angry."

"What do you mean, miss?" cries he, "talking to that—that—"

"Never mind, Lettice, tell me just the words."

"We all know better than that, Mr. Ralph, but he *did* say, 'that lowborn fellow, Ralph Robbins, the son of my gardener.'"

"Well, well," I ejaculated, impatiently.

"I always talked to him, papa," she said, in a very low voice. "I always thought you liked him. I—like Ralph."

"Well then," says he, and I tell you his voice sounded angry enough, "I *forbid* you to like him, do you hear? I forbid you to

"like him, do you hear? I forbid you to see him, or have anything to do with him from this time henceforth." O Mr. Ralph! I decline to repeat the words he used, because we can all see that your mother is as much the real lady as—*as Mrs. Windle, perhaps I may say—*"

"Yes, I think you may," I repeated, with emphasis.

"Or any other," Lettice continued. "And your father has neither common ways nor looks with him; his worst enemies say that. But, dear me, how I am running on!"

"Well, and did Miss Rose make any other reply?"

"She began to cry, and sobbed a little. Then when she left her father, she ran in to me.

"O Lettice!" she said; 'do you think my father means that I must not even speak to Ralph, when I see him, my own Ralph?'"

"Did she say that?" I exclaimed, half beside myself with joy.

"Hush! Mr. Ralph, they will hear you. Yes, indeed, she did say that. Then she lifted her face, and thought a minute. 'I don't think he said, not to *speak*, but, not to have anything to do with him; does that mean not to speak? O, I am sure if I met him anywhere, and never spoke, I should be shamed to death. I've known him ever since I was a baby, and he's been so kind to me.'"

"God bless her!" I cried, choked a little.

"Said I, 'baby,' you know I'm silly enough to call her that, yet, says I, 'I guess there wouldn't be no harm done for either of you just to pass the time of day, when you do meet.' And you don't know how much that seemed to comfort her; why it dried her tears up directly. The dear little thing, I hadn't the heart to torment her, she's such a sweet little puss; not a bit proud or sarcastic, like her mother. Dear knows, I should hardly think she belonged to them."

My mother looked at me searchingly, as I came in.

"Father says there has been a little trouble," she said; "what is it?"

"Nothing, only I wish I could go off to college to-morrow."

"Mr. Windle spoke—said something you did not like, I fear."

"Mr. Windle, he's a—a poodle!"

She burst into her old merry laugh.

"You have described him exactly," she said, still laughing. "That's just what he looks like, but, poor man you know he can't help his looks."

Four hard working years, a brilliant closing up, and I was a man. A gentleman, it will do no harm to say, for that child's pure face kept me pure. My mirror and my mother both told me that I was handsome, and I believed both, as a matter of course.

On my first arrival at home, I felt there was a change, but in what? My mother seemed to me to be younger and handsomer, but that was not it; my father was in better spirits than I ever remembered to have seen him; our home was unaltered. The same cheerful keeping-room, with its well-worn carpet, and window full of plants, and yet I persisted in thinking there was a change.

"How are the folks?" I had asked my father, as, after the first greeting at the depot, we entered the stage together.

CHAPTER III.

A BIRTHNIGHT PARTY.

"I SUPPOSE you mean the Windles," he said, smiling. "Mr. Windle is sick with the rheumatism; Mrs. Windle is busy getting up a ball for Rose—it is her birthday on the 17th—and Rose herself is very well, I believe."

"Sixteen," I muttered, musingly.

"Yes, that's her age," said my father, laughing. My cheeks felt scarlet.

"None but the *elite* are to be present, I suppose," I said, with some bitterness.

"Only the *elite*," replied my father. "But I have procured a ticket for you."

"For me!" I started, faced him. I could scarcely believe that he said it.

"Yes, for you. It is to be a fancy-dress ball, and I hear Miss Rose will go in the character of 'Morning.'"

"For me? Why father! how did you obtain it?"

"No matter how I obtained it, I have done so, and all you have to do is to decide upon your costume. You are changed, you see. Four years have altered you, with that mustache."

But one thought, but one anticipated pleasure pervaded my whole soul. I should see Rose, and see her under the most favorable circumstances. My father put a purse into my hand the next morning.

"Go and order your dress," he said.

"We want talk business till after the party."

I hired a court costume, a dress of great splendor. My mother was in ecstasies when she saw me in it.

"I procured your admission as Ralph Huntington," said my father.

"And why not in my own name?" I asked, hastily.

"For satisfactory reasons. You shall know them in time," said my father.

Then there was a mystery.

My ticket admitted me, of course. The charmed precincts of the Windle House had not been trodden by my feet, since that time—sixteen years ago—I first beheld the charms of baby Rose. The rooms were flooded with light; the walls charmingly trimmed with flowers.

"You are acquainted with Miss Rose, I presume," I said to a beardless youth with whom I had scraped acquaintance since my entrance, and the points of whose velvet sleeves seemed to give him great annoyance, as they dangled down below his knees.

"O yes, very well acquainted," he replied, catching up the left point, and forming it upon his sleeve. "Confound these things! I wish I dared cut them off. Why! have you never seen her?"

"The last time I met her was nearly two years ago."

"Indeed; well, she's changed, of course, developed into a splendid little lady. Look here, would you pin this down to my side? That won't do either. Confound this dress! it was the only one to be had, and I shall feel like a fool—O, there she is!"

I looked up suddenly. Our eyes met. I don't know what mine said that she so suddenly dropped her glance and blushed. Beautiful, most beautiful she was in her snow-white gauzy draperies, with sprays of silver, and little flashing things—I can't describe a woman's toilet—I only know that she was beautiful, bewitchingly beautiful, and that before a great while I was standing at her side.

"Do you know, Mr. Huntington, you are not so much changed but that I remember you?" she asked.

"I feared you would not," was my low reply. "My change of name—" I stammered at that, not well knowing what to say.

"It was very cunning of you," she said, not seeming to notice my embarrassment; "though in that dress I don't believe my

father would recognize you. I am sure my mother would not. The last time you came, if you remember, Lettice and I met you at the cottage; there was a friend with you, a young gentleman."

"Frank Bassett," I responded; "he proved himself unworthy of my friendship. We are not friends now."

"Ah! indeed! he seemed a very pleasant gentleman, though Lettice, I am afraid—" She blushed again, and was silent. I understood her, and if she had gone further, should have rejected her frankness.

"My love, who is that gentleman?" I heard her mother ask, after I had led her for the second time to her seat.

"Mr. Huntington." She looked down on her engagement card, her cheeks ablaze.

"Huntington," said some one near; "where did I hear or read that a great fortune had fallen to a family of that name?"

"Indeed?" queried Mrs. Windle.

"Yes, I am quite certain that was the name."

Was that the meaning of the change at home? Or had my father, hearing of that circumstance, imposed me upon them? Never; I knew my father's sense of honor better than to believe that for an instant, so I banished the thought.

The next day my father inquired about the party, and expressed an interest to hear the minutest particulars.

"My boy, you love this rich man's daughter," he said.

I could not deny it.

"And if she loves you she shall be your wife, too."

I looked up in amaze; Rose Windle the wife of a gardener's son!

"Listen to me, my boy," said my father. "For twenty-four years my life has been under a cloud. But for your mother I think I should have hung myself long ago. When a young man I was wild, but not vicious. One day a terrible crime was committed in a foreign city, the city of my birth. The murder was traced to me. I had no hand in it whatever; but the man who did the deed contrived to fasten the suspicion on me, and so cunningly that I could not clear myself. Finding escape impossible, I fled. My father, my brother, all but my mother, believed in my guilt. In this town I found the situation I now fill. This heavy beard and this arrangement of my hair have been quite sufficient disguise."

"Within a month the real murderer has confessed, and now my father, Judge Huntington, of Wiltshire, advertises for his son. I have written him, and received an answer to my letter. My father is very old. I am now his only son, and heir to millions, it may be. Thank God! my boy, the bitter past has not been without its blessing. I can stand now on an equal footing with—my master." The first and only time he ever used that word, and by his accent and expression I knew what his servitude had been to him.

His next step was to speak to the father of Rose. The old man was enraged, both at the presence of his gardener and the mission he came on, and vowed that if he was well he would horsewhip him for the insult. My father kept quiet, only laid a short paragraph on the book the old man was reading.

"Hum—how—ha! this alters the case," cried the old toady, holding it close to his eyeglasses. "Mr.—Mr. Huntington—I'm—I'm pleased, I assure you—I congratulate you—very fine thing—very satisfactory to you—must be. Well, well; this alters the case, of course. Yes, yes; alters the case very decidedly. I'll think about it."

CHAPTER IV.

SOMETHING WRONG.

"I'LL build a regular palace," said my father, laughing.

"With stained windows?" cried my mother.

"And your hands that are so little and white, darling, shall never be soiled with household toil again." That was me. I had always been so proud of my mother's hands.

"Silly boy!" But the look and the smile both contradicted her words.

"You will settle here, then, father?" I asked.

"Indeed I shall, my boy. I want nothing of the old country but my rights. Since my mother has died, all my interest for the old home has died out. I suffered too much there, God knows, and have no wish to revive old recollections. No, no; here I shall make my home. You know, love,"—turning to my mother—"the old knoll behind the great elm that you have so much admired."

"O, you will build there!" cried my mother, with sparkling eyes.

"Yes, I will build there, and it shall be the prettiest house in the country. I will make it resemble my old home, with its wide staircase and great hall—the hall much wider than two of these rooms, my dear. And the garden—well," he laughed, "I think I shall be my own head gardener; I am about perfect now, having served an apprenticeship so long."

This was six months after we had come into possession of our fortune. My father still remained at the little cottage, preferring to do so till all the business was settled. Lettice, pretty Lettice of the great house, as we still continued to call it, came down three or four days in a week, as often, in fact, as she could be spared, to help my mother. Lettice was a frank handsome girl, undersized, so that she looked younger than her age. She was, in fact, fully five years older than I, but one would never have taken her to be more than eighteen.

Of late there had come a change over the blooming face of this handmaiden. Sometimes at my speech to her, any little silly word, she turned scarlet, and again she eyed me in a defiant manner, or with glances that I could not at all understand. This had been going on ever since my return from college.

I had said to her only that day, "Lettice, what makes you seem so changed?"

"You know very well, Master Rafe," was her reply, with a severe look.

"I know *what* very well? What do you mean, child?"

"O, don't call me child," she answered, pettishly. "You know I'm older than you."

"Really, Lettice, if you are older than I am, I must say you act very childishly. I am displeased at it, Lettice."

Her lips trembled at this, tears came in her eyes.

"You know I am only a poor girl," she cried, a passionate pleading both in voice and eyes.

"Well, and what if I do know that? For heaven's sake speak out; don't talk in enigmas."

"You ought not to treat me so, indeed you ought not, Mr. Rafe. What would Miss Rose think if I told her?"

"Miss Rose—if you told her?—told her what?"

"Of—of your conduct," sobbed the girl, flinging herself out of the door.

I stood like one in a maze.

"What does the creature mean?"

I turned over in my mind all I had thought, and said, and done. I could find nothing to torment myself about. The girl was a fool, or something worse. What meant her turning pale and blushing rose-red by turns? her conscious looks, her stutterings and stammerings? The longer I thought, the more perplexed I grew.

"Does it strike you," I asked my mother one day, "that Lettice grows strange in her ways?"

"I was thinking of it that very moment," she said, looking somewhat searchingly at me. "I have noticed her gazing towards you with a strange expression. I hope, Ralph, you never trifle with her in that thoughtless manner young men often assume."

A strange heat broke over me; the next moment I felt chill. It had never occurred to me that my innocent little chats with this girl, my foolish little speeches, none of them savoring in the least of personal gallantry, could have had any weight with her. The pretty, vain, foolish, little thing! My cheeks tingled as I thought—first barely hinting it to myself, then dwelling upon it with a half-angry vehemence.

Did the girl think more warmly of me than she should? If so, she was a silly little fool for her pains; for before Heaven I felt myself clear of ever having, in thought, word or deed, any intention of provoking or in the least stirring her admiration. The poor silly little moth! And what if she should drop a hint to Rose?—or Rose, noticing her altered looks, should press for an explanation. I had thought better things of Lettice—poor doomed Lettice, over whom the shadow of approaching horror was slowly settling, even then. If she would say something that would give me any chance for an explanation. Well, well, time would tell.

CHAPTER V.

AT HOME.

SUPPER was over, and so was our castle-building. There would be a moon in the early part of the evening. Pretty mother laughed at me, seeing me step back and

forth before the small mirror in the keeping-room.

"Up to the great house, I suppose," she laughed. "What! you're not going to take it all down again?"

"Bother cravats!" was my reply. "I never can tie them nicely."

"Suppose I be your tire-woman?"

"O, gladly, most gladly bend I my neck to thee, royal mistress," I cried, in mock grandiloquence, bending on one knee.

How her silvery laugh rang out! Thinking of subsequent incidents, it makes me shudder to this day when the memory of that bit of acting comes before me. I see it all—the faint light of the early moon silvering my mother's beautiful face, her soft luminous eyes shining into mine, the tiny curls escaping here and there from the banded locks, the touch of those little delicate fingers, the satisfaction with which I surveyed myself, the loving kiss I laid on my mother's white forehead.

"Now I'm all right!"

"I suppose Rose would think so, if your toilet was wrong from head to foot," responded my mother.

"I should be sorry if she did," was my mental reply.

What a night it was! or rather what a twilight. The brown hills flushed with red at their tops, the amber shallows by the roadside in which was reflected the broad honest-faced burdock leaves, and the tiny grasses that crept up beside them, the hedges, in some places deep and dark, and the "Blackmere pool," as my father had always called it, a shallow irregularly-shaped body of water at the foot of two old heathery moss-braided rocks, and over which grew three stunted willows. It was very like a spot of water in his native town, father always said, and that was why he gave it the name. Ah! black and foul might it well be called, that sullen pool, with sometimes a star-shadow trembling down to its depths, when it could find a loophole through the twisted branches.

It was not a long walk from our cottage up to the great house, but I lingered, I scarcely knew why—lingered to hear the bird-twittering in the hedges, to watch the little clusters of wild flowers that would so soon be gone—for it was nearing autumn—lingered with such a heaven of happiness in my soul as almost made me forget my mortality. I have learned since then to trem-

ble, at such bursts of ecstasy; for I verily believe the angels were not happier than I that beautiful hour.

Rose was at home, waiting for me in the large drawing-room. In my exalted mood, even the commonplace took on a new and fine loveliness; the roads, the fields, the trees, the brown hills, just fading into the silvery dimness of faint moonlight—what, then, do you think my Rose looked like? so lovely! so ethereal! robed in the fleecy muslins she knew I loved so well. I recall that long wide room, rich with splendors of upholstery, the clear sweet essence that seemed to waft in from the open window from the beds of roses and the long borders of mignonette. I recall the soft brightness of the astrals—gas we had not there then—how deliciously transparent the delicate statuettes cut in marble and ivory seemed, standing on their little brackets here and there.

But lovelier, more glorious than all, my own human flower, the sweetest thing God ever gave to earth, I whispered. I saw no shadows then, for Rose was ever all kindness. I heard no warnings in the wind, felt no chill of coming desolation. With life and all it held I was satisfied. Even a leaf could not have been placed on the brim of my happiness.

Rose was not quite like her old self. She complained of a slight headache. She had tried to sleep it away, and to will it away, she said, and even to laugh it away; but it was so obstinate! obstinate as myself in some things, with a silvery laugh.

Her cousin from the city was staying with her. Rose wanted me to see her. A quiet little thing, she said, who would take it as a great favor not to be noticed; but she wanted me to see her. And so reluctantly I consented.

She came in, a plain little thing, an excellent foil to my splendid Rose, but I knew my little girl better than to imagine she had ever thought of the contrast. She loved her very dearly, and the timid little creature seemed to worship Rose. She played delightfully; I have seldom heard such execution. Rose and I waltzed merely to see if she could dance away the headache, she said, until we were both too much exhausted to stand.

The clock struck. I counted eleven. It could not be, Rose said. I was positive. Cousin Marcia had counted it ten—only ten.

"I should be too sure it was ten," murmured Rose, "but this head." She pressed her hands on her temples.

I arose to go. She murmured dissent, but I saw that she was very pale. The dancing, instead of lessening, had increased the pain. Rose went with me through the hall, walking languidly, exclaiming as we stood together on the top step, how beautiful the evening was! All down the path the white light struck out every point that was capable of radiance, and the shadows of the trees, clearly cut and very black, laid at even distances as far as the eye could reach across the shining avenue.

I thought of the lines of some old poet long since mouldering in his grave, and could not forbear repeating them aloud:

"The busy world was still, the solemn moon
Smiled forth her silvery beauty, and the stars,
Like living diamonds in a sea of glass,
Danced in the sapphire canopy of heaven."

"Just such a night as this," said Rose, smiling. "I often wish I could remember such descriptions, but I cannot."

"Where's Lettice?" cried a quick startled voice.

"Why?" Rose had sprang from me. "What is it, Hannah?"

"Nothing." The girl was regarding me with a cold look, a look of which I thought more afterwards than at the moment.

"Isn't she in the house, Hannah?"

"O, I dare say," disappearing and shutting the door with a slam.

"It seems to me they all act queerly of late."

"Who, dear?"

"The servants—particularly Lettice," she added, a moment after, turning to me again.

My face changed; I knew it was observable in the clear moonlight, that deep burning red which would leap to my cheeks. Rose saw it, looked searchingly for a moment, then turned her gaze to the beautiful scene without.

"Well, I dare not stay longer—that head of yours!" I said, playfully.

"It is better, I think, for being out in the air. Did you see a dark figure moving down there to the left, among that clump of trees?" she asked, hastily and nervously.

"I saw nothing, my Rose."

"I did—or thought I did. Yes, I am

positive. The figure of a woman. Perhaps it is Lettice."

"What would she be doing skulking about in that fashion?" I asked.

"That I don't know. It is whispered round that Lettice has a lover. If she has to go *that* way to meet him, he must be, I should think, rather a sneaking fellow. It may be—no matter. I hope she will find some one who will make her a good husband. O, I am warm enough," as I threw a handkerchief over her head.

"But that headache. Go in, love; I will

stand here till I see the last glimmer of that pretty dress."

"A bad sign," she laughed.

"Well, then I'll stay here with my back towards it till I imagine it is gone. Is there any sign for that, except that I love you—love you so dearly, so wholly, my own white Rose?"

She was gone, and I took my way home in a different direction from that I had come by. I wanted to enjoy my happiness in solitude.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

RALPH HUNTINGTON'S TRIAL.

TRANSCRIBED BY MARY A. DENISON.

CHAPTER VI.

THE FIRST SUSPICION.

WHAT time it was when I returned I don't know. Both my father and mother were yet up. At the first glance I saw that something had gone amiss. There was a dark look on my father's face which, from having seen so seldom, and so terribly, I had learned to fear. My mother's voice and face were both sad and anxious. There was nothing like reproof in either.

"Well!" said my father, sternly. Then he got up and walked to the mantelpiece, leaning against it heavily.

"You are up late for you, are you not?" I asked, with as even a voice as I could command.

"Yes sir—with a purpose." My father brought his brows together.

"Don't be too harsh, Hal." And I saw that my mother's lips trembled so that she could hardly speak.

"Why, what is the matter? What have I done? I am conscious of nothing save the happiness I have enjoyed in the company of Rose to-night."

"Trifler!" cried my father, sternly.

"Sir!" I turned rapidly—my eyes, my cheeks felt on fire. "Do you accuse me of trifling?"

"Don't talk too fast," he interrupted me, coldly. "I haven't put my accusation into form yet. On your way you met Lettice—don't speak yet, sir; I—"

"I will speak. I neither met nor thought of the girl." My cheeks burned more hotly than ever.

"Ralph Huntington!" cried my father, and his tones were absolutely awful, "must I tell you—you—"

"Don't, Hal, don't!" cried my mother, flinging herself from her seat into his arms.

"I can't bear to see you look so—I can't hear you say that—to our boy—our boy, Hal. You promised me you would be calm—you have heard only one side of the story yet. If you love me, Hal, don't give way

to ill feeling. You never spoke harshly to him before in your life, never."

"Well, well—wife—I'll—I'll moderate my tones—but this touches my honor—I can't be calm as I might under any ordinary outbreak. Boy, I have tried to teach you from your infancy to be good and virtuous."

"And I have not done dishonor to your teachings, sir," I said, proudly.

"And now to hear—to hear this—" His voice trembled. "So innocent, so manly! Either you are the devil, Ralph Huntington, or you can clear yourself from this charge."

"What charge, in Heaven's name? I have heard none. Be kind enough, sir, to put an end to this suspense."

"Let me tell him, Hal, O let me tell him! If one woman can speak of such things, another can, surely. Let me tell him, for you are not quite your calm, reasoning self."

My mother had come towards me. I saw that she was ghastly pale. As for me, I was more shaken than I dared to confess. Innocent as I felt of all evil in thought or intention, there seemed some silent and terrible evil presence standing at my elbow. I can only think of it now as a woeful image, holding a heavy pall which it was presently to throw over me, and from which by no efforts could I free myself.

"Let me tell you, Ralph." She had taken my hand; hers was as cold as ice. Her beautiful eyes were dimmed with weeping. It was the first time in my life that I had seen her thus affected by any bitter sorrow. Involuntarily I threw my arms about her. My father started forward, angrily.

"Let me tell him, Hal," was all my mother could murmur for tears. My father considered for a moment, then put on his hat and left the room. Thus we were alone.

I led my mother to the old settle, and we sat down together.

"Can you think—do you dream of what I am going to tell you?" she feebly murmured.

"Something about Lettice," I said, quietly.

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"O Ralph!" She started back as if stung.
"I thought of that," was my reply, "because I have lately noticed a change in the girl. She used to be candid, and open-hearted. Now she is pale, and trembles, and creeps about, and gives me strange looks. But what I have to do with the matter I surely cannot guess."

"O Ralph! Ralph! but now your face was white—why do you change so?"

"It is absurd, I know it is. I always blush at little things, like any girl. I happened to think—to think—well, no matter. You are a long time coming to the accusation, pretty mother."

"Don't speak in that light tone, Ralph, don't! It hurts me. There is but one Ralph Huntington, you know."

"Of course I know that, mother."

"And you are he?"

"Well?"

"O Ralph!"—my mother gave another long sad gaze—"we have heard such tidings! It would kill me, Ralph, if I believed it for a moment! But I cannot, looking into your dear face, I cannot. I must believe you innocent!"

"In Heaven's name, do they say I have committed murder?" I cried, almost losing patience.

"Listen, Ralph. You may remember at what hour you left here?"

"Surely, at a little past six. That's what the clock said."

"It was a quarter past seven when she came flying in."

"Who, mother? Lettice?"

"Do you guess so quickly, boy?"

"I know it is concerning Lettice, mother—or at least I feel a consciousness that it must be—I hardly know why I should, except that there have been so many dark hints and looks, or strange actions, perhaps I should say on her part."

My mother was silent for a few moments.

"Ralph, your father went out soon after you did, but presently came in. You had been gone perhaps an hour, when, as we were both sitting here, the door burst open, and Lettice, pale, frightened and exhausted, almost threw herself in. She fell on a chair over there. Your father and myself both sprang up, terrified. 'Mr. Huntington! Mrs. Huntington!' she cried, wildly, 'I must tell you that I will not have him persecute me so. Does he know what a poor weak thing I am? Does he torture me because

he thinks—because he thinks—O, it is too bad—cruel to me—unjust to Rose—Rose who worships him; yes, I can say that—Rose who worships him!' We both ran towards her, too much astonished to speak, for she seemed to be fainting."

"But, great heavens!" I cried:

"Stop! hear me out!" said my mother.

"I went towards her, and caught her from falling. Poor child! I never saw such a change in any one. The color had died wholly out of her cheeks, and her eyes seemed lifted despairingly. 'Lettice,' I said, 'you are surely beside yourself, child. Of what do you accuse my boy? I never knew him to do a dishonorable act.' 'Nor I before—he came home this time,' said Lettice, faintly. 'But he has taken advantage of me. O, indeed he has, and that cruelly; for I have no parents, no home of my own; I am poor and humble, and he can't love me as he says—he'—and her sobs stopped her, poor girl!"

"Love—the devil!" I cried, scorn in my voice and gesture. "Why, mother, the girl is stark staring mad! She's a maniac as true as there's a God in heaven. Love Lettice Hadley! persecute her! I'm ashamed of you, mother, if you believed her idle ravings for a moment against the son who has loved and honored you too sincerely to trifle with the happiness of the humblest woman living."

My mother stood before me, regarding me with mournful eyes. Her face suddenly lighted up.

"I didn't believe her, Ralph—in my very inmost soul I did not believe her; but your father had been listening while she was saying this, and Hal, dear and honored as he is, can be unreasonable. All men condemn each other quicker than women will condemn them, I suppose. He grew quite white with anger, and he questioned and cross-questioned poor Lettice, till she came near fainting again. Then she talked more coherently. She seems to think you have been trifling with her for a long time; that you have waylaid her at unseasonable hours, sending messages that you wished to see her to give some word to Miss Rose, begging her to meet you in out-of-the-way places, in the walks, sometimes after you have spent the whole of a long evening with Miss Rose."

"What does it mean? What an unconscionable scoundrel she must think me, if

—but there can be no if. I never met her in this way. I never spoke a word of love, laugh! to her in my life, never! I have joked with her as I would with any girl I had known from my babyhood; but I never met her by appointment in my life, so help me—”

“Hush! hush!” my mother’s voice sounded shrill; “don’t take any needless oath. I believe you. We have only to wait patiently for the solution of this mystery. I am so troubled about it—the singular hallucination of this girl, I mean. She seems right enough in all other matters; she is sane on every other topic.”

CHAPTER VII.

ANTICIPATED TROUBLE.

My father came in, still angry and heated. I could see that. The words of a suffering woman had been gospel-true to him.

“Well!” he said, and stopped half way to a seat, “had he any excuse to offer for the dastardly deed? Winning a poor girl’s love for his sport! It’s hard to believe of a son of mine.”

I was about to answer in a rage, but my mother stopped me.

“Hal,” she exclaimed, “you have said too much. Don’t—”

“What! you’ve not told him, then, that the miserable creature confessed her weakness, confessed that she loved him—that he had tempted her—that—”

“O don’t, Hal!” almost shrieked my mother, and again she threw herself into his arms.

“My love, we must face this thing; we must tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth—ay, and bear what comes, bear what comes!”

He had spoken in a milder voice; my mother’s distress had moved him. As for me, I was at my wit’s end. What to say, what evidence of my complete innocence to bring, I could not think. My soul was in a tumult. Some unknown horror possessed it. I trembled inwardly. So then it was true that poor Lettice loved me. That was the meaning of the sudden starts, the often shudders, the growing pale and red by turns—this accusation! Wretched woman! Already it had occurred to me that she was so carried away by her foolish, almost guilty passion, that she had planned this miserable

attack, deliberately accusing me of what in her very soul she knew to be utterly entirely false. Yet this was so unlike the good, truthful Lettice I had always known. But what might not the girl have confessed, as my father called it? My blood grew cold. Suppose her tainted in ever so faint a degree with insanity, what havoc might she not make of my happiness? And Rose, innocent, loving, beautiful Rose; she, too might be made to suffer. What to do and say I knew not. I was at my wit’s end.

“Father,” I said, “you have never before doubted my word. Why should you now?”

“Then what does it mean? She told her story straight enough.”

“It means one of two things; either the woman is crazy, or, misguided by passion, she is determined to make her claim on one who never dreamed of approaching her in any other than a spirit of pure friendliness. I think, however, she will have to do something more than concoct lies and then swear to them, if she wants to separate Rose and me.”

“But she was always a good truthful girl. I have liked Lettice from her childhood.”

“Sometimes the mind is suddenly shocked from its balance,” I said. “If she has allowed herself wickedly to covet that which is forbidden, the devil has entered in, and she acts in obedience to his wicked will. The whole thing, however, is a mystery.”

“Then you did not meet her to-night on your way to Windle’s?”

“I surely did not; my oath could not be more solemn than this denial.”

“Well,” my father drew a long breath, “we must leave it for time to decide; but if Windle hears it, you know—”

My heart stood still. The old man had not grown tolerant with age, and he was infirm and suffering. If he heard of it, if Lettice, his favorite servant, should tell him her story, and make it sound so plausible as to deceive a clear cool head like my father’s, what sort of an effect would it have on him? He might shoot me, in his reckless madness; he would certainly refuse to let Rose see me at all. He might suddenly leave the country.

“What can we do to the girl to buy her silence?” I cried, in the first overwhelming fear.

“Buy! buy!” cried my father. “I would

buy no man's silence, or woman's, either. She must be made to tell the truth. You must be faced with her; she shall then tell everything that she has to tell against your integrity of purpose, and you must stand or fall by the verdict of justice."

"Madness!" I cried. "Did you not, sir, come near losing your own life by the imputation that was cast upon you? Were you not—an innocent man—called a murderer?"

My father turned as pale as any corpse.

"I dislike to bring that matter to your recollection—"

"Never mind, boy, never mind; we won't speak of it. I believe you, and can trust you, of course. You have never willfully deceived me, that I can most truly declare. But something must be done with this poor girl. That which she showed to-night was no simulation, but real, deep, unfeigned distress. She is doubtless laboring under a hallucination. I pity the poor creature most sincerely."

"It would seem as if Rose must have noticed the alteration in her maid," said my mother, when we two were talking it over in my own room. My mother had followed me thither, and sat where the soft moonbeams threw a halo of almost divine splendor over her dear face and figure.

"I think she has, mother," I said, thoughtfully, mentally recurring to the time she stood with me upon the steps at the great house, when I knew she as readily as my mother, afterward, saw me change color.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE STROLL AT MIDNIGHT.

"SHE said it seemed to her that all the servants acted strangely of late, and I have observed it myself," I said, taking a seat at my mother's feet.

"Then Lettice has spread this horrible story, I fear."

"No, no, mother; don't hint at such a possibility." And I felt myself shudder. "If they are making it common talk, it can't be long before it gets to the ears of Rose or her parents. Mother, what's to be done about it? I do feel seriously alarmed."

My mother sat looking out thoughtfully. All at once she started.

"See, my boy, is not that the figure of a

woman? Look beyond the two oaks; you will notice the outlines on one side. Yes, it is. I saw her move from one tree to the other. She seems to be watching for some one."

"Can it be Lettice, mother?"

"Why should she walk there, Ralph, at this hour? An unprotected woman would be best off at home."

"There she goes, swiftly towards the house," cried my mother.

The woman was almost running now. This was strange; nothing of that kind had ever been seen before on the Windle grounds. If it was Lettice, she must be crazy to give way to such freaks.

"It would be easy jumping out here and following her," I cried.

"No, no," my mother recoiled; "have nothing whatever to do with it. God shields the innocent. But O, my boy! it seems to me we have all been too happy of late. Sometimes I think it cannot last."

"What! you, too, have forebodings?" I asked.

"Why?" My mother's clear eyes were fastened upon mine.

"Because I have had some superstitious notions of late—pshaw! don't let it trouble you, mother. What harm can come, even of this foolish slander? I am not afraid of it. As you say, God shields the innocent. We must have more faith in him, mother."

"I will try to." I saw that her eyes were dim with tears, and indeed my own eyes felt uncomfortably moist. I could not shake off that cloudy unpleasant sensation of something that had happened, or was going to happen, after my mother had left me. I felt as if there was a presence in the room that I should not care to meet. Something that was continually thinking or plotting about me. I stood at the window for a long time looking out, now upon the waning moonlight. The grounds were not so sharply defined as they had been an hour ago. The soft sweet light of the blessed moon had drawn up all the sparkling arrow-tips that had been lodged in the dark foliage of the trees. Things began to take on uncertain shapes, shadows to waver to and fro with less light between them and the objects they tremulously defined. There were but few lights in the upper windows of the house that loomed up nearly a quarter of a mile off.

I seemed to have lived an age in the short

evening so crowded with events. I pictured to myself the grief and astonishment of Rose, if Lettice should go to her with her strange unreal story. Lettice could so work upon her gentle heart—she was all sympathy for the suffering. At all events, I hoped Lettice in her madness would spare her to-night. In all probability Rose would have gone to bed.

I heard my father walking to and fro in the next room. He must have been shaken indeed to be thus unstrung, for he was a good sleeper, and generally in bed by a primitive hour.

How to meet this altogether unlooked-for trial I did not know. I tried to recall the times I had met Lettice, and when I first began to notice these strange symptoms. She had never been reserved with me before I left for college, and I was well grown then. To be sure I had often laughed and jested, promising to bring her home a beau. She was a remarkably fine-looking girl, and very well bred. No stranger would have taken her for a menial, and in former days she had been more like a valued friend to both Rose and myself. After I came from college I remembered she had been somewhat more reserved, but still seemed to consider me a friend. I noticed that my foolish little compliments made her blush, and that she did not retort as formerly, with merry jesting. When she began to come with my mother, then her demeanor was very much altered, then she became shy—frightened, I sometimes thought—and more than once I caught her stealing furtive glances at me. I had given her three or four pretty presents, but these she received as if under constraint, scarcely thanking me, and immediately leaving the room. What did it mean? The more I puzzled and perplexed my brains, the more hopelessly bewildered I grew. Her bearing had seemed to say sometimes, "I will keep dark, or keep the secret, for your sake." At least that was the way I interpreted it now.

And what if some sudden cloud should overspread the heaven of our happiness—Rose and I, engaged lovers as we were?

But could such a thing be possible? Had not those been the same to me, those last few hours? Not by all the lightnings in the universe, no! There *had* been a something different in her manner. I saw it now. When had she ever called in a third person before? There had been company

in the house—relatives, too—and she had not wished any other presence than mine. The cold perspiration started from every pore. Trouble was coming then; I was sure of it. Her mother, a foolish, proud, pettish woman, had never liked me, even after she found that I was heir to a fortune. I seldom saw her. I knew that she was averse to the marriage, because my father had been her husband's gardener. Was this thing a plot to which Lettice had lent herself? I could not think it of the always true frank-spoken girl. And yet finer minds than hers had been, before now, tempted to duplicity. And her love for me, if indeed there was anything in that part of her confession, had impelled her to take some sort of revenge. I looked at the matter in every light I could think of. My father had ceased his monotonous walk; I could no longer hear voices. I threw myself down on the small couch that stood near my window, thinking to compose myself previous to retiring for the night, but before I knew it, I had fallen asleep.

Visions of horror passed before my eyes in that world whither my dreams carried me. I was in every imaginable trouble. On sea, striving to save Rose in the midst of storm-tossed billows; looking down frightful precipices, where it seemed as if she lay at the bottom, crushed out of all shape; then in stifled rooms, where the flames lapped red tongues through every crack and crevice, and no help near; finally we stood near the Blackmere pool, and with a singular movement Rose lifted up her hands, looked at me with eyes whose expression I can never forget, and cried, in an awful voice:

"Murder, murder, murder!"

I sprang to my feet. Was it an illusion still? Or did I hear that most awful of all cries on the stillness of the midnight air? It was horribly quiet as I groped my way about the room; a stifled kind of a quiet, unnatural, and that excited me almost to fear, though I am no coward. It seemed a long time before I found the matches, and then a longer before I could ignite one. Either my hand was nerveless, or the damp atmosphere had very much affected the phosphorus. During that interval of suspense, that terrified cry haunted me. It seemed to be Rose, always Rose. Could it be that any danger threatened my darling? My hands began to shake: I was for the

first time in my life almost helpless through nervousness. I had often laughed at my mother in her description of this disease, for disease it must become ultimately, in some temperaments.

At last I had a light—looked round my room. Nothing had been disturbed, nobody was there. I fancied I heard movements in the next chamber, but after a few listening moments, all was still. What next to do? To lie down and sleep was simply impossible. That cry and thoughts of Rose troubled me. Had I dreamed it, or had the awful voice wakened me from sleep? How could I tell! And then my forebodings about Rose took full possession of me. To rest was utterly impossible. A half insane desire possessed me to go up to the great house and see, as far as I could judge by outward appearances, if everything was safe. I had dreamed of fire; it might be that I was thus warned of danger. I placed my light safely, and sprang from my window. It was only a few feet to a lower L, and the spring from thence to the ground was easily accomplished.

Hardly sooner attempted than done. The night was dark now; still, not so dark as the surrounding objects, and the narrow path that led into the main avenue could be seen with more or less distinctness.

CHAPTER IX.

AN UNPLEASANT MEETING.

I FELT yet like one in a dream. So vivid had been the impressions of danger which haunted me, and in connection with me, my darling sweet Rose. My heart beat with apprehension. There might be some cause for my frightful dreams; the house might be on fire, though no flame shone as yet. I thought once there was a singular brightness in the direction of the stables, and quickened my steps. I knew by the increasing narrowness of the path that I was nearing the pool, and in the midst of all my fears, calculated with precision how many steps I should take to come opposite it. Suddenly I heard hurried breaths, wild frightened pantings. What could it be? If one of the savage watchdogs was free of his chain, my life was not worth much. I felt for my claspknife, and opened it; determined to defend myself against the dangerous beast. The panting increased; an-

other moment, and some one had me down; I fell, my knife leaping from my hand. The blow had stunned me a little, but I knew immediately that the flying intruder was a man. I lifted myself in the darkness, gathered my thoughts, and listened intently. The man was far enough from me by this time; I could still hear his faintly fleet footsteps. Who could he be, thus running as for life? What had he been doing in the grounds at this hour? Was some one ill at the house? Was Rose worse, and had they despatched one of the servants for the doctor? It was the nearest way to the heart of the town; through our more humble walks. But then there were horses always ready, and in a case of life and death Mr. Windle would never have sent off a servant on foot. I stretched my hand about for my knife, which was a very valuable one my father had given me, but I could not find it. I knew I was very near Blackmere pool, and the knife might have been thrown in there by the force of the fall, for I came down heavily. I raised myself on my hands and knees, and went forward, still searching, but could not lay my hand on the knife. Presently the ground felt very wet among the roots, as I was fumbling here and there, unwilling to give up the search. I thought at the moment it was very strange, and then threw out my hand to find a dry spot, and so wipe my fingers on the grass. As I lifted myself, I took out my pocket-handkerchief to finish the process of drying, and then stopped to think for a moment. What had sent me out at this hour? Merely a foolish dream, which was the result of intense excitement, and the pressure of trouble on my mind. All was still now. The light in the direction of the stables had died away, or had never existed. The wind blew soft and cool from the west; what need of my continuing my progress towards the house? The man I had met was probably an unsuccessful pilferer; perhaps he had been stealing fruit, or had poisoned the watchdogs, whose vicious tempers were well known. Still moving on, and on, as I conjectured, I would at all events have the satisfaction of looking at the house, at the particular window where my love had smiled on me so often. It might please her to know that sometimes I watched there. Her headache might have driven sleep away, and she might be up. I grati-

bed myself with a thousand foolish fancies, and was soon far enough away from the vicinity of the pool where I had fallen. Occasionally I felt a chill; it did not seem to be caused by the cold, for the night was mild, though my clothes, white linen and camlet, were not quite a protection against even that soft night air.

I had reached the house. All was dark; no light at any window. I walked back and forth a few moments, childishly happy that I was so near Rose, and she unconscious of it, when I heard footsteps again. A man came from the servants' side of the house, bearing a lantern, in which a bit of wax candle was dimly burning. I knew him; it was Gordon, one of the hands who had care of the horses.

"Ah, Gordon! that you?" I said.

He seemed surprised, winking and blinking as he was.

"Ay, Mr. Huntington, it's I. Jones waked me, saying as there was uncommon noises about, and as Jinny Bates was sick to-day, I thought 'twould be no harm to give her a look. Mr. Grinder thinks more o' her than all the rest o' the horses put together. But if Jones fooled me, I'll give him a blessing. You are up late, Mr. Ralph."

"Yes, I couldn't sleep, and I thought I'd take a turn. To tell you the truth, I saw a light off here, and thought maybe you might be afire."

"I reckon there's no danger o' that," he said, and turned to the stable.

"I met a fellow skulking round. I called after him; he was running at a pretty hard pace down by the pool. Been stealing fruit, I guess."

"By Jings! I'd like to have caught him!" he cried, stopping short. "One of our Bartlett's been stripped clean. I'd like mighty well to have caught him at it. Well, good-night, Mr. Ralph."

"Good-morning, rather," I answered, hearing some distant clock strike three. I took a turn round the house to satisfy myself thoroughly that there was nothing to fret about, and then leisurely moved back on my homeward way, loitering much in the same manner as usual; for when anything occupied my mind I was always slow of motion. Thinking never yet accelerated my speed, as it does in some persons.

My window was gained, and, noiselessly, as I thought, I slipped into my room. The

candle had gone out, but I was now too thoroughly wearied to light it. I undressed hastily, and tumbled into bed. Still followed by unpleasant visions, my mother, I thought, came to my bedside, dressed all in white, holding a dim light, and there stood weeping and praying over me. I asked her why she was troubled.

"O my child! the avengers of blood are on your track," she moaned. At which I seemed to tremble and shiver in my sleep.

In the morning I felt feverish and thirsty. That disagreeable haunting sensation that follows after any unhappy occurrence, affected me unpleasantly, even before I fully realized what had taken place. It was past my usual hour for rising, and I tried by my haste to redeem the time. As I was plunging my hands into the wash-basin, a sight for which I was not prepared struck me with horror; my hands were covered in streaks and spots with blood. I never shall forget the sensation with which I stood spellbound, rooted to the spot, and gazed upon it. Then I had cut myself with my knife on falling. But no, there was no wound, not the slightest mark of even an abrasion. My nose had bled then; it must have bled. I examined my shirt, my nostrils; no trace of the vital fluid there. Then all at once the vicinity of that black pool came up before me, and the surprise I experienced at finding the ground wet. My handkerchief! I caught at the thin camlet dresscoat, hanging over the chair, and pulled the handkerchief from the pocket. Gracious Providence! that too, was covered with blood, in great spots and blotches. My strength seemed to leave me for a moment. What did it mean? what could it mean? The blood was certainly not mine; whose then? A weakness, almost a faintness, came over me, with the recollection of that voice, which, perhaps, had not been, after all, a dream; that shrill suffering cry of murder.

I trembled as I dressed myself, throwing the clothes I had worn but yesterday in a heap by the side of the bed, and putting on fresh garments. I was in a strange state of restlessness, not knowing whether to speak of the matter to my mother, or not. The breakfast bell rang before I was ready to go down.

"We are all late this morning," my father said, moodily; as for my mother, she either could not or would not meet my eye. I had

always before this kissed her on coming down stairs; this morning I somehow felt an aversion to meeting her; I could not tell why. Her face, too, had lost all its sweetness of expression, and looked haggard, almost old.

"You are not well, mother," I said at last, as she handed me my coffee.

"No; I have passed a sleepless night," with a strange despairing glance at me, that went to my heart, as if I had been the veriest criminal.

There was little said at the table. My father was unusually moody, almost irritable. It was a glorious morning; I remember to this hour how sweetly the birds sang, and how I thought to myself, we ought all of us to be happier than we are in this bright beautiful day. And still some unaccountable oppression weighed me down.

I took my hat to go out; walked as far as the outer door, but something in the fair clear beauty of the sky seemed to smite me. I ought not to be happy; I ought not to rejoice. There was something wrong; something miserably, awfully wrong, and some way I had been instrumental in bringing it about—yet how? Poor Lettice haunted me. I thought of her wandering over the grounds like an uneasy spirit; I thought of her suffering under her strange hallucination, and pitied her. I contrasted her probable feelings with my own. If Rose loved me not, then should I be of all men the most miserable. But then if she had lied, if inclination, and envy, and jealousy had got the better of her womanliness; if she had gone to Rose—O, if she had gone to Rose with this same story—gone to her in her pretended anguish and tears, and pale cheeks and wan eyes! My blood ran cold.

And now I had to endure an added misery. I was sitting with the paper in my hand, which my father had relinquished to me. My mother was moving in her usual way—no, not in her usual way, for the little snatches of song, the loving question, the merry laugh were wanting, and she went silently from point to point. Yet, though her tongue was mute, I felt that she questioned me. Ah! questioned and doubted. I felt that her eyes were upon me, with the quick stealthy glances that had so annoyed me in Lettice. However I shifted the paper, I knew that they pierced through it, those eager, unhappy, doubting eyes. It angered me at last, though I would say nothing.

ing. I dashed down the paper, but so violently that she started, and turned pale. I would not even look her way, but taking my hat, again sauntered to the door.

My father was coming forward.

"Ralph, where's your knife?" he asked.

Did the evil one put it into his head to ask that question? I had totally forgotten about my knife.

"I—I lost it," was my reply. "I was just on the point of going to look for it."

"Lost it?"

"Yes—I—dropped it up by the pool—it was dark—and—I—thought I would leave it till morning. Did you want it for anything particular?"

"Only to get your initials engraved," he answered. "My father's and mine are on it, and I thought as I was going down to Toorsta, I'd see to it. But in heaven's name, find it, Ralph, it is an heirloom, you know, and of costly workmanship. You will certainly find it."

"O, there's no doubt! only—I hope it didn't get in the pool. Still, if it did, I can find it, after some trouble. I think I'll go look, now."

CHAPTER X.

FOUND IN THE POOL.

"WHAT'S that?" cried my father, as the hum of confused voices sounded on the air, five or six speaking at once. Presently coming round a bend in the walk, a strange group appeared.

My very heart stood still for a moment. I fancied it would never beat again.

Something swayed between two tall men, something like a human body, the end of a bright shawl trailing in the dust. The group grew silent, seeing my father and me. I felt like one in a nightmare. Something whispered to my startled consciousness, that that dead or dying thing, that burden swaying from side to side, the scarlet shawl following its every motion, was poor, poor Lettice. I know not why, but every part of my frame seemed imbued with the impression.

"What's that, boys? what's the matter?" cried my father, in a changed voice.

"It's summat we found up here," replied old English George the coachman. "'Twere easier to bring it to the cottage, master, bein' sick, and Miss Rose not over well."

"Good God! what does it mean, boys!" cried my father again, more horrified.

My mother came to the door. A low wild cry of anguish escaped her lips.

"Put it on the bench outside here, men," my father said, turning to forbid my mother the sight.

"If you please, I think there's life there still," muttered old English George. "The body's not cold, missus," appealing to my mother.

"Bring it in then—on the lounge over there. Who has been for the doctor, anybody?"

They had not thought of that. Now one of them set off at great speed.

My mother possessed courage, but I had never seen her so ghastly, so deathly.

"To think they should bring her here of all places, O my God!" she moaned.

I stood outside, almost incapable of motion. A sudden horror, worse than any of the previous fear, had seized me. Hers was probably the blood that had stained me. I had been out at that late hour; my knife would be found. I turned cold from head to foot. I believe I felt for a moment almost as guilty as if I had been the veritable culprit. Still no one knew of my midnight, or rather morning rambles. Yes, the old man who had met me going to the stable. Confusion! What had led him out at that hour of all others? Such a circumstance might not occur again in a score of years. Was there some spiritual league against me? Were the powers of darkness plotting and conspiring to overthrow my peace? Truly the cry I heard was no dream. Poor Lettice! if I had only been wide awake at that moment; though I might not have saved her, I could have brought the scoundrel, her assassin, to justice. Doubtless that was he

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

who ran against me, his foul work ended.

My brain grew dizzy; all these thoughts and a hundred forebodings ran through my mind, while they were taking in the body and placing it decently on the lounge.

Meanwhile my father questioned English George.

"You see me and Tim was coming down this way, coming for to go to the village to order some more of them oats master thinks so much of, when we sees the grass stained and trampled. Says I, 'Tim, the's been some foul work here, I'm feared.' Tim said sure enough he were afraid there were, and we followed up the marks till we come to some signs. Them signs decided us, and we kept on till we got opposite the pool, ye're aware of, Mr. Huntington."

My father bowed his head.

"Well, when we got there, sure enough we did see a sight. There were poor Lettice, poor gel! dead an' stiff, as I thought. She had been dragged, ye see, some ten or twelve yards, nighly as we can reckon, arter the blow'd been given, and tumbled inter the pool. But whoever did it, did his work awkwardly, for she were thrown in so't her head and shoulders was out o' water; and the cold of the water or suthin' stopped the blood."

"It's a strange thing altogether; a very strange thing," said my father, and I noticed that all this time his eyes avoided mine; nor would he look at or speak to me.

"Does Miss Rose know anything of the matter?" I asked.

"No; not a word. We thought the old gentleman and her had better be kept out o' the hearing on't, if 'twere possible."

"It's a very strange affair," my father said again, shaking his head. "I think you'd better keep quiet for a time."

RALPH HUNTINGTON'S TRIAL.

TRANSCRIBED BY MARY A. DENISON.

[CONCLUDED.]

[*This Story was commenced in the April Number of the Magazine.*]

CHAPTER XV.

ACCUSED BY THE VICTIM.

MY father sat down wearily like an old man. He listened, his face shaded by his hand, as I told my story.

"It is unlikely," he muttered.

I arose in a rage.

"You do not believe me—I—your son—a Huntington—am a liar, then!"

"I did not say I did not believe you. Sit down. Getting in a passion will not help your case in the least. I was listening—as a—man in the jury-box might—God help us! It sounds so improbable. You being out at that hour—in the dark—hearing some animal approach, panting—a dangerous dog, as you thought—taking out your knife—being run against—knocked down *just in that spot*—your knife flying from you—it sounds so wild, so improbable! Good God! could you find no other hour in which to go prowling about?"

"It was a most unwise, most childish thing, I admit, but it was done—and if you will question old Gordon whom I met, he will tell you I spoke to him about it, supposing the fellow to be skulking about after the fruit."

"Old Gordon has spoken to me. He's an ignorant, wooden-headed Irishman, as opinionated and full of conceit as a nut is full of meat. He just puts that down against you, and believes, I think in his soul, that you committed the deed. Lettice has been strange lately, and she being never over-wise, has talked of what she told us. Ah! my God! if only we had been spared that!" And his head fell on his folded arms.

"Father, you must believe me—you must have faith in me!" I cried.

My mother came up at that moment.

"Father, they want you," she said—"they have come to take her testimony."

"What! has she spoken?" I asked.

"Yes," with a long grieving glance at me, "yes, she has spoken several times."

My father went down stairs; I crept down

after him, standing in the door just inside the keeping-room. Two or three official gentlemen were there—one of them the coroner. Lettice laid quite still and white, nothing moving save her eyes, and they so solemn in the death-light, that I could not look at them for tears. She seemed to shudder as my father went towards her, and glance in a terrified way beyond him.

"Are you sure you are perfectly calm, perfectly free from malice in giving this testimony?" asked her interrogator.

"Perfectly sure," said Lettice, in a faint voice—"may God forgive me as I forgive."

"And the man who committed this deed —"

"Was Ralph Huntington, son of Mr. Harry Huntington."

I felt myself growing livid, less with horror than anger.

"A base lie! a most outrageous accusation!" I exclaimed, coming out into the light.

Lettice shuddered again. I trembled with passionate indignation; my father had fallen strengthless into a chair.

"Remember there is scarcely a hope that you can live," said the man, coolly, pausing but a moment, betraying no astonishment—"what you say now will go before you into eternity—into the presence of God. This young man standing here—was this the one?"

Lettice cried and moaned feebly, like a little helpless child.

"It *was* he—I'm so sorry to say it. Why did you ask me? Why did I tell? God help me—to bring such sorrow here! Why did you ask me? Why did I tell?" she kept wailing.

"How did you know it was *he*—it was this man?" He had nearly said prisoner.

My heart grew cold.

"O, I saw him. The moon had not gone—there was light enough—do you think I would not know *his* face? He thought I would tell—*her*—and grew angry. I don't think he meant to do it—no, no—it was in

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a moment of passion—I was not so weak as he thought me—O, it has been a miserable trial. He had only to leave me alone, but he would not."

I stood like one stunned. Evidently the girl believed every word she said—believed me to have been the persecutor and assassin, and the proofs were so strangely strong against me, that as I reflected I doubted whether even my own mother believed me innocent.

"This is the strongest and most reliable testimony," said the coroner. "We must arrest this young man. You had better say nothing," he added, as I began to tell my version of that night's wanderings; "there will be ample opportunity given you, and the ablest counsel employed, there is no doubt. As it is you must go with me. I regret to act in such haste, but the facts of the case make it imperative."

My father had not moved. Pained and bewildered I went toward him, and touched him on the shoulder. He, the strong man, had fainted. I only waited till restoratives brought back the life that seemed suspended, and begged a few moments for taking leave of my mother. By degrees I had grown very calm—so calm that I wondered at myself. My request was granted. I went up stairs followed by an officer who waited outside the door. My mother had fallen in a heap by the bedside. She moved a little as the door opened and I entered.

"Mother," I said.

Surprised, perhaps, by my firm voice, she lifted her pale face.

"Is it the worst?" she murmured, feebly.

"The worst has come," I said, no tears in my voice, no wavering, "and I shall try to bear it like a man, like an innocent man. But for God's sake, mother, let me go away possessed of at least your confidence in my integrity."

"You never gave me an hour's suffering," she sobbed.

"And this sorrow has fallen upon you—a calamity which I could not avert, but which I solemnly swear I had no hand in—none. I want you in the face of the worst appearances to believe this."

"I will—I must, my boy!"

"One word—did Lettice tell you?"

"Lettice told me."

"Cruel and false—even in death—cruel and false!"

"But what does the girl mean? She be-

lieves it, O, she believes it!" groaned my mother.

"Yes, that is evident enough. She is crazy—that is my opinion of the matter."

"Still—Ralph—you—"

"Well, mother, speak out, say whatever you will."

"You were—were out."

"You knew that?" I cried, eagerly.

"I think in moving round you must have waked me. I went in your room—you had been gone not more than a few moments, perhaps—I did not call you; your father had but just gone to sleep, and I did not like to disturb him. But you were gone. I sat up till you came back. O, it was such a weary time! and I full of the saddest forebodings. I heard you enter, waited till you slept, I had myself no inclination to sleep, and then I came in."

She hid her face.

"You lighted my lamp and looked at me—what for?"

"How can I tell? I did it unreasoning, as if something out of myself had guided me."

"And you saw blood on my hands?"

There was no answer, only a quick violent shudder. In as few words as possible I told my mother the story of that night. Thank God! she believed me fully, instantaneously. Her arms were about my neck, her kisses on my cheek.

"And whatever comes—imprisonment, shame, death, you will not believe your Ralph guilty."

"It cannot come to that!" she cried. "God will not punish the innocent, my boy! my boy! my only one!"

There was a light tap at the door. Then it was opened. My mother caught sight of a policeman's uniform.

"It cannot be that they will take you to prison!" she cried, wildly.

"Mother, be calm, for father's sake." But her cries were agonizing. They nearly unmanned me. I tore myself at last from her arms, and went out.

CHAPTER XVI.

WORDS OF CHEER.

THERE was no more irresolution. I felt as quiet and composed, save the trouble my mother's anguish gave me, as if I were going out on some holiday excursion. My

father was nowhere to be seen. A hastily improvised screen was drawn about the couch where Lettice laid.

As I left the cottage porch I saw that the crowds had increased, every one anxious to get a sight of the criminal. It did not affect me in the least, till Mr. Windle came stumping down toward me, pale and lame with his last rheumatic attack.

"Look here, look here! what does all this mean?" he asked, angrily. "I only heard of it an hour ago. What! you boy in custody? Why, you might as well take me up for murder, and done with it. He never touched the jade, a wild-headed, silly-faced thing. Well, well, this is a sensation!" And he struck his cane on the bit of pavement in front of our door.

"You are right, Mr. Windle," said I, my voice shaking a little, for I had not expected this from the hot-headed old man; "I know nothing about it, so help me Heaven! I am entirely innocent."

"Of course you are, and these men are fools, fools! every one of them. A young fellow like that, an honorable young man, of unblemished reputation—a man I was going to take into the bosom of my family, carried off like a common felon—it's—it's outrageous! it's—it's damnable!"

"Can't be helped," said one of the officers, testily. "The girl accused him."

"She be—" he cried, his face grown actually ferocious. "An addle-pated, hair-brained jade! It *shall* be helped, let me tell you, sir. I'll employ the best counsel in the city of —. I'll spend half my fortune, if need be, you pig heads!" he cried, turning hastily and stumping in the direction of his own house.

The old man's rough sympathy cheered me, and troubled me, too. I feared that he would tell Rose in a hasty moment, and I wished it to be kept from her, for a time, at least. Terrible knowledge would it be to her, for we loved each other ardently.

CHAPTER XVII.

IN PRISON.

"DEAR ROSE,—Your father called here last night, and gave me permission to write to you. Do you know I am somewhat astonished that he should espouse my cause so warmly, when so many of the wisest heads in town have given me up? He still

insists that it is all a plot, that somebody has determined to ruin me, and is in league with Lettice. Well, this is a strange conclusion to arrive at; for what deadly enemy have I, pray? who that would wish me such harm?

"Do not mourn on my account, dear love; keep as cheerful as possible, or your health will suffer. Pray for me, and rely on that best of all advocates who defends the innocent. They say that circumstances are very much against me, but God is able to control circumstances.

"I thank you for going down to see my mother. I knew she would be ill, but I am very glad that she is able to be about the house. I am glad, also, that Lettice is improving so fast, 'mine enemy' though she has been. She is still very positive, they tell me, though apparently loth to say much about it, and willing to admit that my actions were more like those of an insane man. It is really a very bewildering case; I confess that it puzzles me not a little, and yet I cannot feel that I shall be convicted. They say that they have received more testimony as to my whereabouts on that eventful night. Twiggs who keeps the barroom, says that I was there and called for a glass of wine between ten and eleven. Do you remember when the clock struck ten, and you wanted it to be eleven because of your headache? Then I did not go for some time, and finally we stood on the doorstep fully half an hour. You can judge whether between that and the clock striking eleven I would have gone nearly two miles for what I could have at home for the asking.

"Others say they have heard me boast of my conquest of both the lady and the maid. That is almost too coarse for your pure ears, but you will probably have heard it before now, and I am positive you will not for a moment believe it. But the waning light warns me to stop. Good-night, dear love, and God bless you! I shall come out of this brighter than ever, if I come out at all. Thank your father for his kindness to me; I hardly expected it.

"RALPH."

"DEAR RALPH,—Your little note came to me this morning and cheered me. I had grown quite miserable, thinking of you shut up between those awful gray walls, this beautiful day, but you spoke so brightly

about your situation, your birds and your flowers, that I could not be miserable any longer. Father says I shall see you before long. I think it has quite built him up, having this trouble to busy himself about. He is all the time on the move, now seeing this lawyer, now seeing that, answering letters, consulting with your father, who bears himself quite well.

"Your mother is not much altered by her illness, only a little paler. She seems to love to have me come there, and we often talk about it together. She wishes Lettice to stay there, at least till she can stand alone, which she cannot do now. Lettice gains very fast, but she looks so woe-begone! I think she feels unwilling to believe the evidence of her own senses. I have questioned her very closely, and she does admit that if it was you, you acted very unlike yourself; that you were hasty, scible, and, forgive me, profane. Now that latter makes it look less like you than any other part of the evidence.

"Why, Lettice," I said to her, 'you declare that he must have come, often out of my presence, to meet you, and yet that on more than one occasion he was quite in drink. Now how would that be possible? I should certainly have noticed such a transgression as quickly as you would, and yet I never did. Besides, he always refused wine, even at the risk of my father's displeasure, who would call him white-livered because he was so temperate.' That seemed to puzzle her very much, but still she persists asking, 'but who, then, was it?'

"True enough, who, then, was it? I am sure there's nobody living within twenty miles that looks like you; and if there were, what motive could he have to act as he has? But, after all, we ought to be so thankful that Lettice is getting well, though the physician says the wound will always affect her health. Father will not speak to Lettice—and you remember how much he used to like her. He says she is an artful little hypocrite. Now I don't believe that. She may be laboring under an hallucination, but she is not a hypocrite. They are going to make a great point of the *moonlight*. Your mother is very positive at what time you went—knows almost to a minute, and says the moon had been gone an hour, fully that and more. That it was quite, quite dark when you left the house, and Lettice says when the blow was struck it

was a faint moonlight. She has told me all the *minutiae*—it was very unpleasant; she has been quite a heroine. She don't want to tell it on evidence, but I suppose she must. O Ralph! how could she for a moment have thought it *you*? If I were your lawyer, however, I should counsel you to keep up your heart. And yet, how you can be cheerful in that place, is more than I can imagine. I should die. O, I hope I may very, very soon see you, free and sitting by my side. More than ever I am yours,
ROSE."

"MY DARLING BOY,—I send you the papers as you requested. You will see the accounts differ widely, some pronouncing you meek and penitent, others hardened and unhappy.

"I am slowly convalescing, and only sorry that my illness has kept me away from you. I envy your father the pleasure of seeing you—yes, it would be a pleasure to me, though you are in that place I shudder to mention. Your father grows down-hearted over it sometimes—declares that his family is fated to suffer for the sins of others; but I tell him that perhaps they are also fated to be righted at last, as he was.

"My dear boy, they tell me you are cheerful, even happy. And that while it seems probable that you will be convicted of this dreadful crime, I have come to speak of it and write of it with steady voice and hand, and I think it is only in my dreams I suffer keenly. There I always see you in deeper trouble. Rose is an inexpressible comfort to me. I never knew what a lovely creature she was till now—so gentle, so winning and beautiful. I fancy she has grown more beautiful. She comes here very often; never leaves without having a long argument with Lettice, whose faith seems a little shaken lately. She admits frankly that, now she has had leisure to think the matter over, the whole affair seems as mysterious as it must to either of us. She is by no means so positive or so clear. She is very weak yet, scarcely able to sit up, but comparatively cheerful. In her moments of despondency it quite unfits me for anything to hear her mourning over you.

"Last night a queer old beggar came to the house. He carried a small sack and begged for old clothes. I happened to have some, and gave them to him. He sat a

while, and was quite entertaining; said he had been gone from town for a matter of three or four weeks, and had but just returned. Asked some particulars about the —about *Letty*. We satisfied him as best we could, for he was very pertinacious, and indeed seemed but little like a beggar in his language. Then he wanted to know about you, wished me to describe your appearance, and was not content till I had satisfied him on every point.

"I should like to see this young man, madam — perhaps —" He stopped a moment, apparently in deep thought, and then repeated that he should like to see you. You may think it odd, but that one word '*perhaps*' made me half wild to give him an opportunity to meet you. Am I foolish, I wonder, in thinking that there may be something providential in his coming back and stopping here? Keep up good courage, my dear boy, and God bless you!"

"MR. RALPH,—I write these few lines with a trembling hand. Since all my sickness and suffering I have had the strangest thoughts. Sometimes the past seems like a dream; sometimes I wonder if I may not have been walking at times in my sleep, as I have read that people often do—somnia-bulists. Be that as it may, I fear I have injured you, and I am sure that all my unkind feelings are gone, quite gone. I begin indeed to question sometimes whether I ever had them. Indeed I get very weak thinking and trying to reconcile things. It must have been you—it could not have been you; that is the way the reasoning revolves through my brain, till I grow bewildered. I would not for the world harm an innocent person; and they all have so much faith in you. I hope you will forgive me for all I have made you suffer—it must be suffering for one of your active temperament to be cooped up in a prison. The word makes me tremble. And if you are convicted, I know I shall never desire to live, with the awful possibility that I may be mistaken on my soul.

"Your mother is an angel; she has nursed me most tenderly, making herself sick, I fear. Since then, Miss Rose has been with us—dear Miss Rose! who I am sure loves and pities me. As for her, I almost worship her; and if you are cleared, God grant you may be happy with her all the days of your life. Your unfortunate friend, *LETTY*."

"THE prisoner, we are informed, is moody and sullen; a light eater, and unwilling to admit visitors. We understand the trial will take place on the 24th, and there is every probability, etc., etc."

"The prisoner seems cheerful and healthy, converses with affability, leaving an impression of his innocence on all who enter into conversation with him. There is a general conviction, etc., etc."

These little trifles tended to wear away my irksome imprisonment. It was laughable to read the contrary opinions of the different Solons of the country press; the long descriptions of my manner and speech. To some I appeared ferocious and hardened in the extreme; to others, gentlemanly, *suave* and persistent; to yet others, lively, joyous, and totally devoid of conscience.

One day I was surprised by the entrance of a nondescript, a man of fresh, keen, thoughtful countenance, dressed in slouching, beggarly garments, and carrying an old canvas sack in his hand. He eyed me closely as the warden ushered him in, a smile lighting up his face. He seated himself familiarly, drawing his chair up closer to mine. Then he thrust his hand into one of the pockets of his wornout sack coat, and produced a note soiled and creased, all the time looking at me with that singular familiar smile.

"I wished to ask you," he said, slowly, "if you ever saw this handwriting, or know whose this signature is?"

I took the worn paper, cast my eyes over it, and read the following, dated nearly two years back:

"DEAR LETTY,—Come down by the old spring to-night, I've something to tell you. By the way, don't believe old Rafe, who I am sure loves you himself—he as good as told me so; he's jealous, the rascal, and that's why he is sowing the seeds of dissension between us. But he can't do it, can he, my pretty Letty? Be sure and come, or I'm in despair.

"Lovingly yours, F. B."

"Why! it's one of Frank Bassett's old love-letters, the villain!" I cried, growing red. "Where did you find it, old man? How came you in possession of it?"

"Never mind how I came in possession

of it," he said, in the same slow voice, taking it back, and refolding it; "never mind how—I've got it, and that's enough. What sort of a looking fellow is this Frank Bassett?"

"Why, good looking, for such a rascal."

"About your height?"

"I should think so."

"Dark eyes, rather light hair?"

"Why, that's him! so you have seen him, then? We used to think it singular, hair and eyes so different."

"A complexion like your own, good features, no side whiskers, no mustache."

I laughed at the recollection of the many times the fellows had bothered him out of his wits at college, because he could raise neither of the latter ornamental and hirsute appendages.

"Yes, yes, that's the fellow!" he mumbled to himself. "Met him of late?"

"The very day I was brought here."

It seemed right and proper that this gentlemanly old beggar should question me with his lawyer-like sagacity, particularly as I inferred this was the very old fellow who had stopped at the cottage, and whom my mother had written me about.

"Do you know the whereabouts of this man?"

"I do not. Before that day, I had not met him for a year. But I know that he had an uncle in Hilltown, some ten miles from here."

"Hem! Did any one ever tell you, or did you ever notice, that there was a striking resemblance between this Bassett and yourself?"

I laughed outright at this question.

"Never! my hair is brown, almost black; his is nearer straw-color than anything I can imagine—never!"

"But he has black eyes and good features."

"O, he's a handsome fellow, Frank is! If his character was in keeping with his face, I'd not be ashamed to own a resemblance, if there was one—but—impossible! there's not the ghost of a likeness."

"Well, you are right; I don't think there is," he said, smiling. "At the same time you are positive this is that man's handwriting?"

"O, I could take my oath of that!" I replied.

"It strikes me that is the name of the girl who was nearly killed."

"Lettice, yes, the very girl; he professed to be smitten with her."

"You did not consider his intentions honorable."

"I don't think he would do a strictly honorable thing if he could."

The old man nodded his head several times, and fell into silence. Then he said:

"I believe you are right. I have no opinion of the young man myself—I believe you are right," and rose to go. I asked him if he thought he had any evidence to bring forward at the trial.

"I don't think you'll be troubled with a trial, young man," he said, and arose to go, nodding at me, and smiling.

Not be troubled with a trial!—comfortable, if true. But what did this old stroller know about it? Still, vagabond though he was, he had, as my mother expressed it in homely phrase, "heartened me up a bit." My spirits felt lighter after he had gone. I had no inclination to work at the telling vindication that I had employed my leisure hours upon, but instead, chose a romance, and hoped that no more visitors would come in. I was tired of the show part of the business, although it had served to amuse me.

In the afternoon my father came in with old Mr. Windle.

"Well, we've got all the evidence," said the old gentleman, who looked better than he had for years before; "and though we can't prove an alibi, still we've got some strong points, eh, Huntington? and the smartest lawyer in ten counties. Besides that, the girl is low-spirited, and more than half ready to swear that she must have been mistaken. Give her time, and it's my opinion she'll do it. So keep up your heart, my boy."

"What is this story about an old beggar or peddler meddling in the business?" asked my father. "Your mother told me of his calling at the house."

"He has been here." And I narrated the circumstance.

"Something odd about that, Huntington," said old Mr. Windle, nodding his head; "something mighty strange about that. There is a story, too, going the rounds that some counterfeiters are in ambush in this place, and detectives are in search for them. By George!" and he brought his hand down with much violence upon the table, "I'll wager a thousand

dollars that old gray-beard is one of 'em."

"One of who?" asked my father, anxiously.

"Why, a detective!"

"I think so myself," I said, as some points in the conversation flashed over me. "The man was neither beggar nor peddler."

"So he said the trial would not come off, eh? We shall see," cried old Mr. Windle, testily. "After all this drumming up, money spent and shoe-leather worn out. No, no; I'm for the trial now; I want to see what sort of a case W—— will make out, he swears that he shall win, the old fool! hanging particularly on the girl's testimony. If she had died, well, perhaps he might; but as she lived, and every day grows more disinclined to testify against you, why, our side must triumph. Our boy don't look much like an imprisoned assassin, Huntington, eh?" And the old fellow laughed heartily.

"Still the trial may go against him," said my father. "Never crow till you are out of the woods."

Three days more, and now there were only twenty-four hours to intervene before the case would come off. I had spent my time in reading, writing and study, but yet this confinement told upon me. My appetite rejected the delicate fare that was always at hand, for both mother and Rose remembered me, and my supplies were bountiful. My cheeks were thin, and I felt that my face was beginning to wear an anxious depressed look. I trembled at times, when I thought of the future, and could not avoid many an anxious foreboding.

The old beggar had not again made his appearance, either at home or in the prison. No one had seen him. The night before the dreaded day, I had thrown myself down on my pallet, thoroughly exhausted. I felt hunted down, for I had received visitors, curious strangers, interested professional men, and my lawyers, since the early morning. Besides these, I had written letters, revised my defence, fasted, from sheer inability to coax an appetite, and I felt that sleep was the only blessing I coveted just then. I had fallen into a doze, when I heard the key rattle in the lock, and decided that whoever had come, unless it were one of my own immediate family, I would sleep too soundly to be lightly roused. At first I thought I heard a sob, then the rustling of soft dresses, then a subdued whispering.

"Poor fellow!" my heart leaped at that voice, "he looks thoroughly worn out. It seems almost a pity to wake him, even for—"

I was sure somebody was kneeling by my couch, and opening my eyes, there was my mother, her sweet face flushed, her eyes sparkling with tears that hung unshed on her lashes.

"Free, free! hurrah, hurrah!" and up went a shout, the mingled voices of men and women, that sent a thrill through my worn nerves, and startled me to my feet.

"O my son! my darling!" cried my mother, flinging her arms about my neck and weeping on my bosom.

Another moment and I had looked around. There stood Rose, pale and beautiful as a moonbeam, smiling, though her pretty lip quivered. Beside her Lettice, rather hanging back, with flushed cheeks and downcast eyes. My father stood against the wall, his arms folded, a look of deep content brightening his manly features. Mr. Windle rubbed his hands briskly, and winked hard; and last but not least came the face of the beggar in the garb of a gentleman.

"What does all this mean?" I cried. "Something favorable has taken place."

"I should think so," said my father; "merely that the real assassin has been found."

For a few moments I could not speak. Rose had managed to get by my side, and now held one of my hands.

"Well," after I could command my voice, after I had sent up a fervent thanksgiving to the great Advocate for the innocent, "was it my double?"

"Yes and no," said a voice, which I recognized as that of the pseudo beggar.

"And who was it, pray?"

"Frank Bassett!"

"Frank Bassett! my old enemy—my double?" The perplexity I was thrown into by this announcement nearly threw in the shade the joy I felt at the near approach of freedom.

"A man I have been hunting for six months; a young, but desperate and hardened villain," said the detective.

"Ladies and gentlemen, I wish I could give you seats." Rose nestled closer to me. My mother sat on the bed, Lettice was installed into one of the two chairs on account of her weakness, Mr. Windle in the other.

My father and the detective both preferred to stand. I placed Rose by my mother's side, and edged myself against the head-board.

"We had nearly succeeded in breaking up a nest of the most dangerous counterfeiters that has been located in the city for years. Several of them were young bloods, working under disguises and aliases, so that watch as we would, the scoundrels always evaded us. I had, however, heard a pretty thorough description of their chief, and within two or three months have been on his track. Still there was not sufficient proof in my possession to arrest him.

"A few weeks ago, perhaps all of two months, I came here in my disguise, a wandering beggar, and having seen some suspicious lights in that old tumble-down house by the turnpike, I determined to watch it. I found that a young man of respectable appearance secreted himself there at times, and managing in my assumed character to waylay him, I knew by the description I had that I had discovered my man. Once, in order to get rid of me, for I was a persistent beggar, he gave me a worn-out blouse. In that blouse between the lining and the cover, I found the note which you saw the other day, young man, and which long ago, I suppose, slipped through some rent in the pocket. Still I was not done with him. I managed to secrete myself for three nights in the old house, in order to ascertain what his object could be for hiding. On the third night I discovered his secret. Watching him from my point of observation, I saw him take a small square of broken mirror from some corner, and so proceed to adjust a pair of false whiskers, a mustache, a wig, and after all this, with a few additional touches, he stood up, the living image of yourself. I could not have told you apart, quick as my sight is, keen as my vigilance. Of course at the time no harm had been done, and though I followed him once or twice, I saw no evidences of danger. How long he had been personating you, or what his motives were, of course I could not tell, nor did I know anything of you at the time. I left the place, returning in less than three weeks, and then I heard of the attempted murder. I understood the whole thing then; the case was as clear as day. I visited your father's cottage, collected my facts, came here, put detectives on the fellow's track, found him,

and to-night he takes your place, with this difference, that you have the consciousness of innocence to sustain you."

"Did he confess?" I asked.

"He has made a clean breast of it, and it is well for him he did. We have learned nothing as yet with regard to the counterfeiting business, but I am very sure to do so. I shall follow that up presently."

Lettice was sobbing.

"O Mr. Ralph! can you ever forgive me?"

"My poor girl! what have I to forgive? You were not to blame. Lettice, even this man, accustomed to detect disguises as he is, might have failed. Don't distress yourself."

"But O, Mr. Ralph! to think that I should have felt as I have towards you this long, long time. I can't forgive myself for it, indeed I can't."

"But you must, my poor girl, for you have been more of a sufferer than I have."

"Thank God that he let me live!" she cried, fervently. "O, thank God that I did not die with that miserable suspicion upon my soul."

"Hush, Lettice, you will make yourself ill again," said my mother, gently.

"I don't see what we're staying in this horrible hole for," cried Mr. Windle, flourishing his handkerchief over his eyes.

"True enough!" cried my father, and came forward, put his arm about my waist, and kissed me fervently. He had not done that since I was a little child; it made the tears well up to eyes that had scarcely moistened through all these trials.

There were two handsome carriages at the door, and around these a curious crowd had gathered. As I appeared, a voice that had been haranguing the crowd stopped suddenly, and a lusty cheer went up.

"Hurrah, boys, for Mr. Huntington! hurrah for Mr. Windle! hurrah for the crowd!"

The horses grew restive, but the practised hands of the Jehus guided them safely through the noisy throng.

As we approached Windle House, there seemed an unusual stir and bustle about the premises. Suddenly, as by magic, the grounds became alive with lights. Triumphant arches had been hastily erected, and hung with many-colored lanterns. The very trees had been illuminated. Shouts, and laughter, and cheers resounded on all

sides. The servants were almost beside themselves; the townspeople who had heard the news were gathered there, jubilant. Mrs. Windle, faded and ill though she had been for so long a time, sat in her travelling-chair by one of the windows of the long drawing-room, which was trimmed and festooned with flowers. Rose cried, my mother laughed and cried together; Mr. Windle hopped about on his rheumatic feet, and swore that everybody around him should be happy that night.

A loaded table was standing in the hall for all who wished for refreshments; a magnificent banquet graced the dining-room.

"See what it is, you rogue, to get out of trouble," cried my future father-in-law, with many a curious grimace. "You're a hero now; a sort of king with all the people hereabouts. Now those who've cried you down hardest will be sure to say, 'I always told you so.' O yes! they all knew you were innocent, knew it perfectly well; they're not in the least surprised. But to tell you the truth, I who all along protested you *were* innocent, am the most astonished man among them. I'm disappointed, too; wanted that trial to come off, you see. We should have heard eloquence, I can tell you; ah! we've lost it all now."

"But, papa, you're not sorry?" cried Rose.

"I don't know, youngster. It might have been rather hard on you to put the marriage off a dozen years or so, but then—"

Rose was off, blushing.

"Mr. Ralph Huntington, I'm very much pleased that you are cleared," said my future mother-in-law, in her slow concise language. "To be sure it has made a great stir, got into all the newspapers, and so forth, which made it unpleasant for me. Mr. Windle likes such excitement, but it

kills me—it really was too much for me. However, I am so glad it has come out all right. It is the first time, I think, such a scandal has happened to *our* family, as I was telling your mamma."

Poor mamma! I thought her cheeks looked very flushed, and hastened to comfort her, for really that haughty little-souled Mrs. Windle has not lost her love of stinging and taunting to this day, though she is always very gracious to my father and myself.

Lettice is now the wife of an honest man, and a gentleman, a school-teacher, and she bears her honors well. She is always humble and gentle towards me, as if she would atone all her life for her terrible suspicions.

Rose is my beautiful, true and loving wife, and we live in that mansion blocked out by my father on the knoll, and shall continue to reside there during Mrs. Windle's lifetime. Still, though she is a drawback to our complete harmony, yet we are very, very happy.

Frank Bassett is still in prison, and has several years yet to stay. I have had one or two conversations with him, in which he surprised me by raking up little matters which he held against me, which I had quite forgotten. His is a very vindictive temper, and I have heard that he threatens to be revenged on me yet. I do not fear him, however. He certainly showed a tact, even a genius worthy of better aims and ends, in his personation of me; timing my hours with great precision; getting control of poor Lettice so far, that but for her courage and stinging taunts, driving him to madness at the moment of his desperation, she would have been a ruined unhappy woman for life, and have brought others down in her fall.

So this is my plain story of my experience of circumstantial evidence.

RALPH HUNTINGTON'S TRIAL.

TRANSCRIBED BY MARY A. DENISON.

CHAPTER XI.

SUSPECTED.

PRESENTLY the doctor came. My mother had done the best she could, bathing the white face, using stimulants, and there was yet life in the poor girl's frame. Doctor Wyatt was a small fussy body, who always made a great deal of noise over his patients.

Occupied in my own gloomy thoughts though I was, I could still hear him through the open door.

"Scandalous! — shameful! — shameful! Bad wound—very bad wound. I'm afraid it's mortal—yes, yes, mortal, certainly—yes, yes, sure to be fatal. Poor thing! Who hated her so? Poor little thing! Great favorite of mine, Lettice—scandalous thing! Haven't any clue yet, eh? Don't let the grass grow before you find one. Hunt, search. Ah! an ugly wound! In good hands, though, Mrs. Huntington—in good hands, I'm sure. 'Fraid she'll have to stay here a day or two—wouldn't do to have her moved. Don't let the neighbors come in. There's a chance that she may become conscious before she dies; she—"

"Then you think she will die?" queried my mother, in an unnatural voice.

"O yes—next to impossible that she can live, with that wound. Have heard of such cases, though—but next to impossible. Did she have any company, madam? Could it have been jealousy? I'm surprised; I didn't know poor little Lettice had an enemy in the world. Can you account for it, madam?"

"Indeed I cannot," my mother responded, her voice shaking. It went to my heart, thinking what her suspicions had been—thinking that only the night before Lettice had behaved in that extraordinary manner, in the very room where she was now laid so near to death.

"Boys, keep this matter still for a while," said my father, coming out again. "It's best for Mr. Windle not to hear of it, as the doctor says his system is very much deranged. And it would shock Miss Rose ter-

ribly, she thought so much of Lettice. I myself will take the proper steps to inform the authorities. We don't want the grounds thronged all day with thoughtless crowds—at all events not till the girl dies. They would be sure to press about here and disturb her last moments."

The men promised, and went their way. The thing was sure to be known, however, before long, even if they were silent, and it was not very likely they could be.

Meantime I was tormented by doubts as to the propriety of disclosing what I knew of the matter—vague enough to be sure. If that scene had not occurred on the previous evening, when my father all but lost the control of his temper, I certainly should have told what I knew; but now a certain fear held me back. I knew that his own well-conquered mental sufferings had rendered him more liable to irritation—had weakened in his naturally strong mind his powers of judgment, and the smallest evidence would be taken against me.

I would go up to the house and see Rose—yes, that would quiet my nerves, perhaps, and after that it would be better to tell of my miserable midnight, or rather morning, stroll.

I went in. My mother sat by the sufferer. The doctor had advised that she should not be moved. Her clothes had been cut away from the wound. A light white counterpane had been thrown over her. How very white—and yet how beautiful! Her countenance seemed to wear the sweet repose of sleep. Her hair hung, all unbound, over the couch, and streamed nearly to the floor. My mother had pressed it back from her forehead.

"She does not suffer," I whispered.

My mother gave me one quick frightened glance. I remember now there was a horror in it—an undefined, unspoken horror.

"No, I think not," was the reply.

"Poor girl! a hard fate!" I murmured.

My mother shuddered.

"Mother, I'm going to see Rose," I said.

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She bowed her head, mutely. "I shan't speak a word to her of this, of course—you think I had better not."

"I think you had better not."

She was so absorbed in her task of watching for the slightest return of consciousness, that I forgave her her coldness of manner—never thinking—

I hurried up stairs. I had not spoken of the handkerchief—I had unwisely kept silence. Now I went with a vague feeling that I would hide it, or burn it—shuddering at the thought of even touching it again.

It was not to be found—neither that nor the clothes I had huddled together. I looked in my clothes-press. My camlet cloak hung there, intact, but the handkerchief, the white linen trousers, were gone. Great Heaven! I had never thought to examine them—never dreamed that the sanguinary crimson might have blotted them. I stood still and trembled like a child. Who could have taken them? Nobody, I felt certain, but *my mother*. She had gone very early to my room, then, much earlier than was her wont. What vague suspicion had she that should lead to that result? I went slowly down the back stairs, a very coward now. I did not dare to face my mother; I did not wish to meet my father's eyes again. I knew now what were the awful suspicions that they would not for worlds have whispered to their own hearts. Stealing out at the kitchen door, there I saw my handkerchief, spread on the grass, every stain obliterated, and hanging on a hastily improvised line, were the trousers I had worn the day before, guiltless of any spot.

It had been my mother's doing, then—and by their condition (they were nearly dry), she had washed them before the body of that unfortunate girl had been brought to the house. What had led her to my apartment so very early—what suspicion? She could not surely have learned that I was out of my room, out of the house, as I had been, on my foolish bootless tramp.

I went by a circuitous path toward the house, stopping shudderingly at the pool. No one was there yet, for a wonder. The water still looked sullen, but it seemed to me as if its dark hue had changed to red. I peered round for my knife. It must be found, or what horrible lie might it not fasten upon me? I searched hither and thither, supposing myself the only person there, carefully avoiding the suspicious spots

and trails of down-trodden grass. My search was utterly in vain; so I continued my walk perplexed and agitated.

Rose was in, just in from a drive to the town. Her cheeks were bright with health and youth. She sent me word that she would see me for a few moments, just for a few moments. When had she ever before sent such a message as that?

I went in, listless, anxious, but concealing my depression—met her with a smile. She had thrown her hat aside on a table, and was just pulling off her gloves. I thought her an unnecessarily long time about it.

"What a beautiful day it is!" she exclaimed, as at last she sat down beside me. "I have been shopping."

"I am to presume, then, that your headache is gone," I said.

"O yes; it was very bad last night. I could scarcely get to sleep. I heard the clock strike three."

"Indeed." I could not repress a start. I too had heard the clock strike three.

"It is very bad to lose sleep—at least for me. I should have been very dull to-day but for my drive. I've been buying some worsted—Lettice promised to knit me one of the new-style shawls, and I'm quite anxious for her to begin."

Well that she had risen up to fetch the worsted that I might see the beautiful colors, or she could not have avoided noticing how that little speech shook me.

"Are they not pretty?"

"Very pretty indeed."

"It seems to me—are you ill, Ralph?"

"Why should you think that?" with a nervous little laugh that I tried to make careless.

"Why, your hand trembles so—and positively you are quite pale—white, I might say."

"Do you suppose your sex monopolizes all the headache in the world?" I asked.

"O, I'm so sorry!—of course not—only men never *will* tell; it has to be forced from them, and we silly things are so ready with our complaints. Hear my birds. Are they not splendid?"

I dared not tell her that their blithe music almost drove me wild.

"Now do you know I'm going to set Lettice to work immediately? Maamma does so monopolize her! But then she suits both of us so well! Ralph!"

I started for answer.

"Well, indeed I think you have a headache, and are nervous into the bargain. Do you know I think Lettice is in some silly trouble or other?"

I started now for answer, as I had started before. I could not trust myself to speak.

"Yes, she is very much altered, and I can't find out just how it is; only I know—I think—yes, I know she has some lover who is not acting quite honorable towards her. She told me as much last night."

"She told you as much last night?"

"Yes, after you had gone she came in. I never saw such a looking creature. It seemed as if death would not have altered her in the least. She had been out, too; so I suppose it was she we saw skulking, though she wouldn't own it was. O Miss Rose," said she, "I'm in a great deal of trouble! O, if I only had a mother to go to! I pitied her, indeed I did. She is an orphan, poor girl! and has been ever since she was five years of age. But then I tried to laugh it off, too, because I'd seen for a long time how hysterical and nervous she had been. 'Why, Lettice, you can't have a lover now, can you?' I asked. Lettice is ten years older than I am, you know, and five years older than you. Not so very old, either, I suppose, only it seems so. And she is a pretty girl, rather—don't you think?"

"Yes, Lettice is a fine-looking girl," I found voice to say.

Rose dropped her eyes.

"Then she began a long story. Some one—some one that *I knew*"—her eyes were raised again—"was persecuting her dreadfully. She couldn't bear to think, or to speak of such wickedness, but in justice—but she thought it was time she should now. She had grown afraid for her life, and she believed he was not sincere, whoever he was; she believed he was bent on destroying her peace—everybody's peace. And when I asked her who it was, she grew red and burst into tears. 'Ask Mr. Ralph,' she said, 'ask him—he knows, and he will tell you.'"

Had the lightning struck me, I think I should not have been more stunned. Rose was looking at me now, straight in my eyes, an anxious appealing glance in hers.

"So I ask you, Ralph—to tell me who is troubling poor, innocent, orphan Lettice, in this miserable manner—who?"

"Before Heaven, Rose," said I, solemn-

ly, as soon as I could collect sufficient breath, "you ask me a question I cannot answer. I do not know—how should I know, dear?"

"But Lettice was so positive! O Ralph! Ralph!" She seemed to restrain herself, drew a long heavy sigh, and edged herself a little way from me.

"But, Rose, my darling, is not my word as sacred, as much to be relied on, as that of your servant Lettice? You have known me a great many years—did I ever do or say a false thing? Answer me, Rose."

Her eyes were full of tears. I had taken her hands in mine. She struggled a little, then her head fell forward on my breast. I felt myself miserably unhinged in all my faculties. Had I given way then, I should have cried with her like a baby.

"O Ralph! I had a wild wicked suspicion. Forgive me!"

"Is all the world in league against me?" I cried, with sudden passion, springing from my seat.

"O Ralph! don't look like that! Forgive me—do forgive me—don't think of what I said. But she put it into my head—not my heart, Ralph—it never reached my heart. There I am true to you—there I will never, never believe one word against you!"

I turned to her; my face felt like stone.

"Rose," I said, "I will tell you so far as I believe to be the truth. I do think—it is not my egotism, God knows I have little reason now to be gratified with the thought—that the poor girl thinks more of me than she should—and this foolish wicked passion, if such it is, has perverted her mind, till she has made herself believe that I have let her think that I care for her. I am sorry for her, but, Rose, God above us knows that I never dreamed of giving her one of the least of my thoughts. I never addressed her with one word which I am ashamed to remember. I never thought of her, or any woman, with one thought that would bring a blush to the cheek of even my pure Rose. Believe me, Rose, believe me, if you would not kill me with doubts. Whatever happens, under whatever cloud I may be, still believe this, my darling."

"I will—I do believe you, entirely," said Rose, "and I am troubled to see you looking so pale."

"I have reason to look pale, Rose."

"I do assure you nobody shall ever slip a doubt of you again. And to show you how

little I think—" she rang the bell near—" of this matter, I'll—"

A servant came, opened the door.

"Tell Lettice I want her."

A strange sound caused us both to look up hastily. The woman had ventured in a little further, showing a red face and swollen eyes.

CHAPTER XII.

LETTICE MISSED.

"WHAT is the matter, Margaret? Tooth-ache again?" called Rose.

"O no, miss."

"What, then?"

"O, it's trouble, miss!"

"Do you want me—to see me alone?"

"O, if you please, no, miss; but—but."

"Well, you can order Lettice here, can't you."

I felt as if all the blood in my body was surging toward my brain.

"Don't stand there so stupid, Margaret."

"O miss—but, miss—Lettice aint here."

"Well, where is she?"

"She—she—"

"Never mind, Rose," I said, hastily rising. "Perhaps Lettice is missing."

"Hasn't she been in the house all night, Margaret?" Rose was now alarmed and had arisen. I believe in my intensity of dread I cursed them both, almost.

"No'm, I believe not," blubbered the woman, bursting into tears again.

"You are all so stupid!" cried Rose, in a pet. "I'll see what this means. I'll go down to the servants' hall—"

"No—Rose,"—I started forward now in an agony of fear. "Don't go; trust me—I—I will go and see what it means."

She stood quite still, trembling, though. I could see that.

I quieted her, however, bade her not stir from the room, and went out, half delirious. Where was this to end? So, as I feared, Lettice had told her. Dying or dead, I cared not, but felt a degree of bitterness towards the girl, such as I hope never to feel towards any human being again.

The cool breeze was grateful to me as I stood in the hall door, for my head was throbbing and burning painfully. What to do I knew not. I determined first to ascertain how far the murderous assault was known, and so went myself among the ser-

vants. They eyed me askance. It was evident that Gordon, who had met me with the lantern in the early morning, had sowed the seeds of suspicion in the breasts of his fellows—not because he particularly disliked me, but there was no other object so definite to pitch upon; so he had narrated how he had talked with me—about the fire, and other foolish things. "And why were I out at that time, eh? Something more than a dream, ye'll better believe—and he and Lettice has acted strangely this time past." Yes, the servants knew it, one and all, and had already thrown their suspicions in the first convenient direction.

I assumed a quiet I was far from feeling as they stood around me.

"And what be your opinion about it, if I may be so bold?" asked one of them.

"My opinion is, that you'd all better be on the track of the murderer, than standing round giving *your* opinions," was my tart answer. Very unwise it was, too—as I considered when it was too late. But I felt irritable and half angry at what Rose had told me—quite undecided, too, as to what I should say on my return, for return I must, as she was waiting for me. I would have unsaid it if I could, as I saw their discontented faces and lowering eyebrows, but could not now.

I walked slowly back to the house, a prey to the gloomiest forebodings, not because I might be implicated, not that, exactly, but all the circumstances with which I was surrounded were gloomy and depressing. But yesterday I had seemed treading the very courts of heaven, and now did I feel like one on the very verge of destruction. True I was perfectly innocent of all wrong intention, even; but my being out, and seen in the mid hours between night and morning, the words of Lettice herself, told to my mother, my father, Rose and I knew not who beside, filled me with a kind of undefined terror, a vague feeling of danger.

I went as slowly as possible up the steps, considering what I should say to Rose. She sat in the same position as when I left her, the worsted on a little table by her side. I paused before accosting her. How very lovely she looked, the warm sunlight goldening her hair and almost glorifying her face! She must have felt I was there, for presently she turned with a sad smile.

"See, I haven't moved. Haven't I been good?"

"Yes, you have, darling—you are always good, I expect."

She shook her head.

"I ought to be, I have so few trials. But of course I'm not. But what about Lettice? Can't they find her?"

"O yes, they have found her."

"Where is she?" growing pale again.

"She is at the cottage."

"What! at your place?—at Mr. Huntington's?"

"Yes, my love."

"Well—I don't see why—she is there. I was afraid last night she would do something dreadful. She has not, I hope—she—"

"Rose, you must promise to be calm. I have delayed the information purposely, that you might expect sad news, and bear it with more fortitude."

"O Ralph! Ralph! how could you? What has happened to poor Lettice?"

"An accident."

"She is killed!" she cried, passionately; "she is killed! my poor dear Lettice!"

"No, Rose; there is life yet, and—and perhaps hope—I dare not say. We wished to keep this sad news from you for a while, till her fate was decided, but it was impossible."

"Tell me more," cried Rose, restraining her tears, "tell me all about it."

"There is nothing to tell, dear, only that she was—found—injured."

"Then—she did not try to kill herself?"

"I believe not, Rose."

"O, this is all very sad! I never expected to hear such news. Dear Lettice—do you know, Ralph, she seems just like a sister to me. O, you must take me to her, Ralph. She would rather see me than any one, I know."

"I cannot consent to that, Rose. I am sure your father would not—I am sure Mrs. Windle would not. Be calm, my darling, and you shall hear from her, whatever happens."

"Ralph, did somebody try to murder her?" Her eyes were wide with horror.

"It looks like it."

"Where did it happen?"

"You will have it, Rose. Down by the pool."

"Blackmere pool—O, I always hated it. How did you know?"

I shivered and grew pale in spite of myself, though her eyes were upon me.

"I know because that is where the men said they found her."

"O, it is frightful! too frightful! And she may die—poor Lettice may die—may be dead! Let me go instantly—I must go!"

"But, Rose, indeed you must listen to reason; it might be fatal to her to see any one now. I think the doctor would not allow it."

"Ralph, you *must* let me go, if no further than to the steps of the cottage. O my poor girl! my poor Lettice! If I had only kept her by me; if I had only taken her into my own room, and comforted her, she seemed in such bitter trouble. Come, I am going."

"I protest against it, Rose; but since you will—why—you must."

She put on bonnet and shawl with nervous haste, her cheeks flushed, her eyes glittering, her fingers trembling; stopping every now and then to wipe the great tears that gathered on her lashes, and which I longed to kiss away, but did not, grown suddenly a very coward.

CHAPTER XIII.

ROSE AT THE COTTAGE.

"I CAN'T bear the beautiful day!" Rose said, impatiently. "I wish the birds would stop their singing, they stun me."

I had felt much the same, so that I could hardly rebuke her. I saw she was taking the path by the pool.

"Go by the other road, Rose, I beg you; don't go by that shocking place."

"Why! is there anything there?" she asked.

"Of course not, only some marks of—of the—it sickens me to think. I came that way; I had rather return the other."

"But I must go by the pool," said Rose, resolutely. "I am not afraid, if you are; take the avenue, and I will meet you."

That stung me.

"I am not afraid," I said; "but if you had seen—well—no matter—go on."

"Has it disfigured her?" asked Rose, in a low voice.

"No; she looks just the same as ever, only white and weak."

"There it is," with a long shuddering breath. Some of the servants stood round. They huddled together as Rose and I passed, giving humble obeisance to the little lady, who was loved by everybody. The news was gaining hearers. Down the path, in the direction of the cottage, stragglers were

making their appearance. The men suddenly ceased talking till we were gone. Presently we came in sight of the cottage.

"Let me take your arm," gasped Rose. "I feel so faint."

"I knew it would be too much for you. I am angry with myself for letting you come."

"No one could have hindered me," was her quiet answer. And I felt certain that she was right; she would have come alone.

And now we were almost there. I trembled with excitement.

"Poor, poor Lettice!" escaped Rose's lips now and then. "I wonder if she can be dead?"

My father came out of the cottage, and walked slowly back and forth upon the porch. He did not appear to see us till we were almost upon him. I never saw him take so little notice of Rose, his favorite, before.

"What is the matter with your mother?" he asked, hoarsely. "She has not been herself to-day. I wish they had not brought Lettice here. She can't be moved now, they say, and I'm sure *she's* not fit to take care of her."

"I will help," said Rose, cheerfully. "Ralph and I. It's my right. But will *she* live?"

My father shook his head.

"Can't you prevail upon her not to go in?" I asked my father.

"Not if she's made her mind up. I wouldn't try."

Rose had made her mind up, but, notwithstanding, she shook like one in an ague fit. So I let her enter the cottage. My mother looked up, her haggard face never altering. Rose began to moan, as if the sight was too much for her.

"Is she alive—are you sure that she's alive?" Rose queried. At the same instant she was answered. The eyes of the wounded girl opened slowly, and were fastened upon Rose, with a wondering grieved glance. "O Lettice!" Rose threw herself down beside her, notwithstanding my mother's caution. "But you must keep up a good heart, and you'll be sure to get well."

The grieved lips quivered a little, the eyes moved slowly in their sockets. I was standing behind Rose, a little at the side, and away from Lettice, but I caught her glance. Instantly a look of the deepest loathing, horror, fear, changed her counte-

nance. She gave a long low cry, and fainted again. Rose looked slowly round at me, a reflection of that same expression on her face. My mother sank to the floor, strengthless for a moment, her face buried in her hands; then at Rose's cry that Lettice was dead, she roused herself, and began to apply restoratives.

"O Ralph! what did she look at you so for? O Ralph! it was terrible, terrible!" moaned Rose.

I felt that it was terrible; the glance had gone to my very soul. But why she should signify such mute horror, I could not tell. Her accusations had been false enough, her conduct most criminal and capricious. Did she also wish to accuse me of her death?

"She is probably delirious," said my mother, controlling her voice. "I think you had better both leave the room. I am sure the doctor would not approve of any intrusion."

"May I not stay here, somewhere?" Rose asked, meekly.

"No; this is no place for you." And an unwonted sternness displayed itself in voice and manner.

"But Lettice was in my service; I loved her like a sister."

"Rose Windle! you *cannot* remain here," said my mother; and there was almost passion in her tones. "If Lettice lives, and should get strong enough to bear the removal, she shall be brought back to you, and you can then do as you please, of course; but while she is here, I shall follow the doctor's instructions, and admit no one. I wonder Ralph was so thoughtless."

"It was not Ralph—don't blame him," retorted Rose. It was the first time I ever saw haughtiness in her gesture. "Good-morning, Mrs. Huntington. If Lettice does recover, she shall be brought home."

"You must remember the great shock it has been to her," I said, soothingly, as we left the house.

"I will not, I will *never* forget it. Your mother has no right to speak that way to me," she retorted, passionately. We walked on in silence, she weeping. I did not answer her, for I felt that my mother had been hard and stern, all unlike her usual self. And yet who knew so well as I what reason she had for seeming so cold and altered?

We reached the house by another road, the main entrance.

"Good-morning, Rose," I said, quietly. "I will return if there is anything favorable to report."

"O Ralph! are you angry with me, too?" she asked, penitently.

"Angry with you! that would be impossible," I said; "and let me beg of you to excuse my mother; it was her intense fear that both you and she would suffer more. You know my mother, Rose; it is not like her."

"She did right, perfectly right. I should have been in the way, and perhaps worried and irritated both her and that poor girl. You won't stay away long, Ralph?"

"I'll come up this evening," was my reply.

CHAPTER XIV.

AN INTERVIEW.—THE KNIFE FOUND.

BACK again through cross paths to the cottage, unable to fix my mind on any one thing. There was plenty to do, but my will seemed totally inert. I thought of the knoll my father had spoken of as the site of a future dwelling, and strolled thither. It was a most desirable piece of ground, overlooking the river on one side, giving a view of the distant city from the other, its spires glittering in the far blue distance; a most desirable spot. Would the house ever be built? I remembered my father's description of his childhood home; it would cost a great deal of money to build such a mansion in America, but then he had the money. I had not been idling all this time, and fully meant to do my share of labor, though my father was a rich man, and I his only heir. I had been studying law, and had of course my ambitions, which were at times colossal. No want, privation or sorrow had ever troubled me from my childhood. My desires had been moderate, and the vices of my fellow-students I had the courage not to emulate. Still, as I thought of these things, and felt that I had a fixed character for good, which, in all my past relations with men, none could throw the shadow of suspicion upon, Lettice, lying there upon the lounge in our keeping-room at home, came up like some spirit of evil, and shadowed every pleasant fancy.

There was a path ran through the place where I was standing, a path only defined by well-trampled grass, and the large trees

scattered here and there served to hide the person whose footsteps I heard approaching, as I stood there lost in contemplation.

At last we met. One glance of surprise, not exactly cordial, perhaps, and I went forward.

"Frank Bassett, you here?"

"Ralph Huntington!" And he extended his hand stiffly.

Frank had been my companion at college, till I first tired of, then despised him for his weakness of character and his vices. He was a handsome fellow, and exceedingly vain, without, it seemed to me, any moral stamina whatever. His talents were good, and his social qualities always made him friends; but me I had thought he hated, too much ever to be familiar. In my earlier years I had often brought him to my father's, before I learned how destitute he was of principle. He had always admired Lettice, and she, I fancied, had liked him. He and I had had a fierce quarrel once on her account, for I saw that his admiration must of necessity lead to unpleasant consequences, as I knew he would never make a girl in her position his wife. He was an excellent mimic, and the life of society, but of late years I had avoided him.

"I'd not the most distant idea of meeting you," I said.

"I suppose not." He spoke rapidly. "I only stopped here yesterday, going further on to an uncle of mine, who lives up in the hills. Well, this is a most unfortunate thing. I hear that pretty girl whom I used to admire so much has been foully dealt with."

"How did you hear?" My question was abrupt.

"The fellow that went after medical help spread the news, I suppose. Is she dead?" he asked.

"No."

"No?" with an accent of surprise. "O! I heard she was. Very singular, wasn't it? Who could have done it? Some unfavored lover?"

"I never knew she had any lovers but you," I said, bluntly.

He turned pale, then scarlet.

"I her lover? nonsense! She had a pretty face, and I am fond of pretty faces, but as to anything serious—pah!"

"You ran after her somewhat persistently," said I, angered at the recollection of his many dastardly tricks; "and, as you

confessed yourself, your intentions were anything but honorable."

"I see you have not got over that disagreeable trick of speaking your mind," said he, with a touch of the old savage temper.

"No; I think it grows upon me," was my reply.

"You're an impertinent fellow," he exclaimed, with an oath; "and I think you'll have a bone to pick in a few days that will trouble you some. There's a rumor about that you were sweet upon the girl yourself, so look out that it don't get you into trouble."

He walked hurriedly away, and I turned off in another direction, wondering why I had not thrashed him, as he deserved. I went direct to the cottage on my return. My father was now the centre of a group of excited men. What was that that flashed so in the sun, that my father looked on with compressed lips and a pained ghastly brow? I knew, it was *my knife*! They had found it, read the initials upon it, and brought it to the cottage. My knees knocked together—a cold sweat broke out over me. Inno-

cent as I was, I have no doubt but that, as one and another faced me I looked like the veriest guilty coward alive. I shook off the weakness in another moment, however, and stepped upon the porch. My father literally gasped as he turned to me, his brow flushed red, then the blood receded.

"This is your knife, Ralph!" There was pity as well as sternness in his voice.

"Yes sir; that is my knife."

"You see there has been blood upon it."

"I see it looks stained."

"Can you guess where it was found?" The servants pressed nearer.

"I know where it was found."

"You know?"

"Yes, by Blackmere pool; I lost it there."

"When?" My father's face grew sterner. I hesitated. Should I tell all before these low fellows?

"I will tell you. I don't care about telling it here, just now."

My father saw that I was calm, that my decision meant something. He dismissed the men. I went into the house with him, and into my own chamber.

[CONCLUDED IN NEXT NUMBER.]